

Speed test, page 15
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Thursday November 9 1995

Abu Dhabi D 8.50	Hong Kong H 8.25	Pakistan P 7.70
Alaska A 1.20	Hungary H 1.95	Poland P 2.70
Andorra A 1.20	India I 1.95	Portugal P 2.20
Australia A 1.20	Israel I 1.95	Romania R 2.00
Bahamas B 1.20	Italy I 2.00	Saudi Arabia S 1.10
Bahrain B 1.20	Jordan J 1.00	Slovakia S 1.40
Belgium B 1.20	Kuwait K 1.00	Slovenia S 1.20
Belize B 1.20	Latvia L 1.50	Spain S 2.00
Bermuda B 1.20	Lithuania L 1.50	Sweden S 1.50
Bhutan B 1.20	Malaysia M 1.50	Switzerland S 1.20
Bolivia B 1.20	Maldives M 1.50	Taiwan T 1.20
Bosnia B 1.20	Malta M 1.50	Turkey T 1.50
Botswana B 1.20	Marshall Islands M 1.50	USA S 2.75
Brazil B 1.20	Mexico M 1.50	
Brunei B 1.20	Moldova M 1.50	
Bulgaria B 1.20	Monaco M 1.50	
Burkina Faso B 1.20	Montenegro M 1.50	
Burundi B 1.20	Norway N 1.50	
Cambodia C 1.20	Oman O 1.00	
Cameroon C 1.20		

The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL
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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Francis Spufford on the Booker winner

Pat Barker

...long straight at the world

Monday 2 with European weather

OnLine

Deepwater archaeology

G2 page 12

Mark Lawson on killers from Brutus to Yigal Amir

The club of assassins

G2 page 4



Damien Hirst's work Mother and Child, Divided is observed by Andrea Davies, of the communications department at the Tate Gallery, where it went on show yesterday Sketch, page 2

Defiant Nigeria stuns summit

Ian Black in Auckland and Victoria Britain

COMMONWEALTH leaders gathering in Auckland last night were stunned as Nigeria's military council ensured its ostracism at the summit by confirming sentences of death by hanging on the writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists.

One senior source said Mr Saro-Wiwa had already been moved from his cell to await execution. "The Nigerians are completely throwing down the gauntlet and forcing the Commonwealth to make a direct response," one official said. "There has to be a reaction, if not, forget the Commonwealth."

The Nigerian army leadership showed its contempt for international opinion by timing the announcement just before the formal opening tomorrow of the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in New Zealand. The fate of Mr Saro-Wiwa, an Amnesty Prisoner of Conscience, and that of other Nigerian political prisoners, was already one of the top items on the summit agenda.

Wole Soyinka, the exiled Nigerian playwright and Nobel prize-winner, and Mr Saro-Wiwa's journalist son, Ken Wiwa, have travelled to Auckland to lobby to save the prisoners' lives.

Early this morning a desperate Mr Wiwa urged John Major, Nelson Mandela, and other Commonwealth leaders to intervene before the death sentences were carried out. "Tomorrow may be too late," he said.

Mr Major responded: "We are concerned about the nature of the trial and Mr Saro-Wiwa and the outcome. It is certainly a matter I will wish to discuss with Commonwealth heads of state."

The Foreign Office condemned the decision yesterday.

Continued on page 2, col 2

US shaken as Powell quits

Gingrich may fill Republican void

Jonathan Freedland in Washington

GENERAL Colin Powell stunned the political world in the United States yesterday when he announced he would not seek to become the country's first black president, amid reports that he was scared off by his wife's fears of an assassin's bullet.

Declaring himself to be a Republican, the phenomenally popular retired general shocked many of his allies and supporters who believed until last weekend that he would seek the party's nomination to challenge Bill Clinton in 1996.

But, in a decision that delighted White House officials — who feared Gen Powell was the one man Mr Clinton could not beat — the Gulf war hero ruled out running for any office, including the vice-presidency, in 1996.

In a moving, idealistic

speech that made it clear why he had generated such enthusiasm, Gen Powell said he lacked the "passion and commitment ... for political life, because such a life requires a calling that I do not yet hear. For me to pretend otherwise would not be honest to myself, it would not be honest to the American people, and I would not break that trust."

He said he made his decision jointly with his wife and family, but conceded that he did not want to make the "sacrifices" public life would require.

Sources said yesterday that Saturday's murder of the Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, finally tipped the balance.

The general's wife, Alma, had already made public her fears of an assassination at

tempt if her husband sought America's highest office, saying it would take just one "white crazy" to end his life.

"He would probably be at much more risk than any other candidate because of being a black man in this society," she said in September.

Yesterday she insisted her fears had not deterred her husband, but conceded that Mr Rabin's death had "pointed up" the risks to leaders and those who seek peace.

Gen Powell will not entirely retreat into private life. He ended 35 years without political affiliation yesterday, declaring himself to be a Republican. But in a clear attack on the party's record on race and its unpopularity with black voters, he said he would work to broaden the party's appeal.

"I believe I can help the party of Lincoln move once again close to the spirit of Lincoln," he said, adding that he would now strive to "heal the racial divides" that plague the US.

The most emotional moment in the speech came when he paid tribute to those who had urged him to run. "In one generation we have moved from denying a black man service at a lunch counter to elevating one to the highest military office in the nation and to being a serious contender for the presidency. This is a magnificent country, and I am proud to be one of its sons."

He firmly ruled out any possibility he would accept the vice presidential running-mate slot on someone else's ticket this time around. But

he did say he had joined the Republican Party, confirming assumptions that the party would be his choice.

Gen Powell, aged 58, who retired from the US army in 1983 as the first black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President Bush, had emerged in recent polls as the only serious challenger to Republican front-runner Bob Dole, the Senate majority leader. The polls also showed Gen Powell to be the only Republican who consistently wins against Mr Clinton. But he lacked the backing of the party's right.

"He would be going to war without any supply lines in place," a Powell associate said.

His decision leaves the way clear for Mr Dole. Dogged by polls that show him nine

points behind Mr Clinton, Mr Dole was visibly relieved yesterday. He said he now hoped he would gain the general's endorsement.

Speculation was intense yesterday that Gen Powell's decision might now entice Newt Gingrich, the Republican House Speaker into the race.

Many rightwingers fear the Republican's congressional "revolution" could founder if the party cannot muster a candidate to match Gen Powell's popularity and who can beat Mr Clinton.

Powell bows out, page 6; The men who fired the shots, G2 page 4

Tory angst as propaganda chief resigns in distaste for battle

Michael White Political Editor

JOHN Major's election planning was plunged into disarray yesterday when Hugh Colver, his newly appointed communications director at Conservative Central Office, resigned, pleading his unsuitability for the post.

"I realise it demands a political propagandist. I am not that. You have got to tap the other side, which I find a bit distasteful," Mr Colver said. He had returned to party headquarters in Smith Square, Westminster, at midnight on Tuesday to leave goodbye letters on colleagues' desks. "He's done a Reggie Perrin," said one.

Mr Colver, a 50-year-old veteran of public relations at the Ministry of Defence, has no immediate job to go to, but was not sacked, senior Tories insisted last night. He joined the Conservative team six months ago from British Aerospace.

There was little doubt that his position had become close to intolerable as Brian Mahoney, the tough party chairman, appointed in the July reshuffle, tightened his grip on the party machine.

Paul Judge, the wealthy executive who held the post of director-general, created for



him in 1992, was eased out this week and, the Cabinet Office announced last night, is to become special adviser to Roger Freeman, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

In a terse comment on Mr Colver's departure, Mr Mahoney said: "In his letter to me today, he told me that on his appointment he had decided to consider his position at the end of six months. On reflection, he clearly feels his talents, considerable though they are, are not best suited for handling the run-up to the general election. I disagree, and I told him that was my view, but he made his decision and I respect it."

31-year-old Tim Collins — who had stepped down after winning the nomination for a safe Tory seat — worked at Dr Mahoney's side. Mr Collins will act as temporary director until a replacement is found.

Evidently unhappy with the aggressive demands of his new job — much more thuggish pro-active than Whitehall press work — Mr Colver waited until yesterday when Dr Mahoney was announcing three new names in his inner circle. Mr Collins, Sheila Gunn, aged 47, from the Times, Carl Evans, 34, from the BBC, and Paul Hooper, 42, who was once on Dr Mahoney's local paper in Peterborough, but has 11 years' experience on the Sun — precisely the kind of background which Tory strategists envy in Labour's hands-on team.

Mr Colver had arrived to a baptism of fire, including Jonathan Aitken's "stray" fax, Shell's U-turn over the Brent Spar oil rig, then-Tory chairman Jeremy Hanley's press conference gaffes and, soon, Mr Major's resignation as Tory leader and Douglas Hurd's foreign secretary.

Last night Labour could not resist crowing. "Hugh Colver is suffering from the fact that the Tory party is now almost impossible to sell to the wider world," a spokesman said.

And merry Xmas to you too, Cedric

Gary Young

BRITISH Gas, which made a £1.24 billion profit last year, is cancelling its pensioners' Christmas party so it can concentrate its resources on shedding 25,000 staff.

A British Gas spokeswoman said last night: "I can confirm that we are not making a contribution [to the pensioners' Christmas party]. We are in the middle of restructuring and are losing 25,000 jobs over three to five years."

"In the circumstances we think it is appropriate to concentrate our resources on our enhanced voluntary redundancy scheme."

The party, an annual treat for many people who had retired from British Gas headquarters, used to be held at the Cumberland Hotel, central London.

Brian Isherwood, aged 63, who worked for British Gas for 42 years, has been to every one since he retired four years ago. "I think it's a little on the mean side for a company the size of British Gas. It was always great to see old friends again. The Christmas parties really helped me feel like part of the family. If I had known about

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Colonels in Kent, clergy in Surrey top 'TV anger' survey

Who's Disgusted? asks Andrew Gull

THE myth that complainants about television sex and violence are all disgruntled 'Tunbridge Wells' has been irrevocably shattered, Lady Howe, chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council, insisted yesterday. But a research document analysing the backgrounds of the people who wrote more than 2,000 letters to the taste and decency watchdog between July 1993 and December 1994 appeared to confirm the stereotypical features of those who complain most.

The majority lived in the South, many in Kent and Surrey, and were most likely to be clergymen, schoolteachers or retired members of the armed forces, according to a survey by David Gauntlett, of the Institute of Communications Studies at Leeds University.

A substantial minority had an independent view with words and particularly aggressive and extreme views on homosexuality. There was no data on how many used green ink.

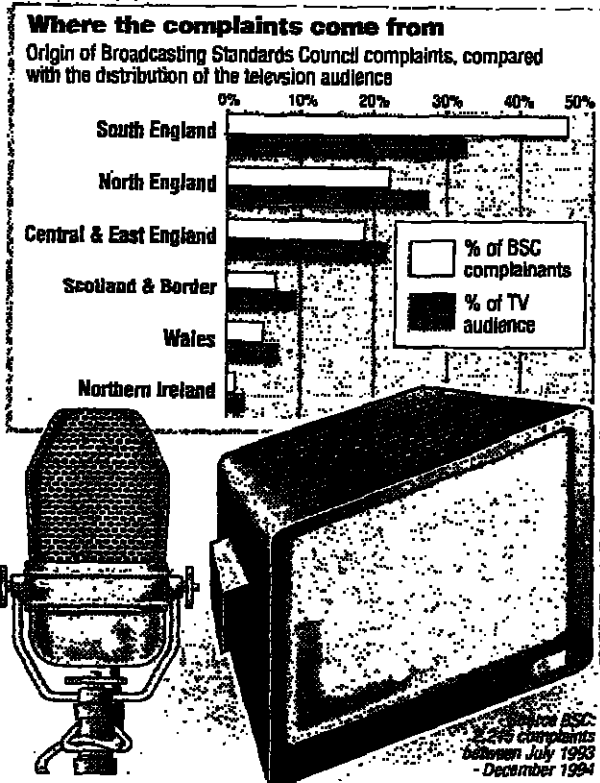
The champion complainant was an unnamed pensioner who wrote 11 letters to the council over 18 months.

He was just ahead of John Beyer, general secretary of the National Viewers and Listeners' Association, who fired off nine angry missives.

None of the letters analysed was from Mary Whitehouse, the founder of the 'National Viewers' and Listeners' Association.

Eighty-eight per cent of those who wrote to the Broadcasting Standards Council were one-off com-

TV: Who's complaining?



Top 10 offending programmes



plainers. Frequent or serial complainants — those who registered more than three complaints — accounted for 30 (1.6 per cent) of the 2,215 letters received.

Lady Howe said: "The findings lay to rest the stereotypes and popular prejudices that complainants come from a small group of disgruntled people, professional complainants and pressure groups."

She denied that the council was a target for letters from the barmy and the extreme.

"You are always going to get a few fairly extreme views. But it really is going over the top to characterise

complainants in that way when you are talking about 30 people who are frequent complainants," she said.

Lord Dubs, deputy chairman of the council, said the research revealed an extraordinary wide range of complainants. "They are not just from Tunbridge Wells. They come from the inner cities, some not very fluent letter writers, but written from the heart."

The report's author, Mr Gauntlett, found no evidence of letter campaigns being organised by pressure groups.

The council denied the complainants were unrepresentative of the audience as a whole: EastEnders, the

television programme most complained about in the survey period, attracted 47 complaints, but it attracts up to 16 million viewers three times a week.

Lord Dubs said: "The complaints are just the tip of an iceberg; it would be very arrogant to say there are only one or two complaints so they should not be considered."

In a third of all upheld complaints, the broadcaster retrospectively admitted a breach of taste, the council said.

Forty-six per cent of complaints were from the south of England, where 32.5 per cent of the television audience lives, making a 43 per cent over-representation.

Putting pen to paper...

A sample of the complaints made

"Fortunately my wife was out of the room... Can you explain the reason for such crude, disgusting and demeaning programmes?"

"Without wanting to be a prude or killjoy, this programme has for years been nothing but a moral sewer... Periodically I watch to see how deplorable the programme is."

"Have BBC gone off their heads — who are these crank trendy perverses at BBC allowing this film?"

"I am not a prude per se, but this was gratuitous filth."

"I am not some batty old maid..."

"I am frankly amazed that, even in an age of mass unemployment, people can still be found willing to produce, direct and act in such material."

"The increase in bad language, sexual scenes and general lowering of standards is, in the mind of many thousands of us, an indication of how rapidly Great Britain is falling into the ways of a fourth-rate banana state with precious little future."

"Unfortunately British television seems to be being taken over by gays and lesbians especially on programmes for very young children."

"I was proud to ride in a big black bomb box over German night skies during the last war, but I feel ashamed to be part of a nation which allows its main broadcasting channels to purvey such offensive filth to its viewers and listeners."

"And don't reply that the word bugger was 'in context' — I don't want it in."

"Am I correct in the assumption that Channel 4 is run by hard left, perverted black gays... I feel extremely upset and annoyed by the perverted garbage put out by Channel 4."

Paris judge paves way for 'human shield' Britons

French hostages win £3m from BA

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

BRITISH Airways was yesterday ordered to pay more than £3.5 million to 61 French passengers who were held as "human shields" in Iraq, after their flight landed in Kuwait moments after Saddam Hussein invaded in 1990.

The passengers, who won the settlement at the high court in Paris, are among nearly 400 people who were aboard flight BA 149 when it landed at Kuwait City on August 1, 1990.

The French court ruled that British Airways had "seriously failed in its responsibilities" towards its passengers because of the dangerous situation in the Gulf at the time.

BA, which called the judgment "extraordinary", is considering an appeal.

Using information obtained under United States freedom of information legislation, the French hostages had claimed that BA 149 en route from Heathrow to Madras and Kuala Lumpur via Kuwait, was carrying SAS soldiers and members of the Kuwaiti royal family. The airline was ordered to pay £600,000 (£80,000) to passengers held in Iraq for three months, and £400,000 (£53,000) to those held for one month. It was

also ordered to pay £60,000 (£8,000) to each of 48 relatives of the "human shields".

British lawyers were last night hopeful that the ruling will increase the chances of compensation for seven Scots and 11 English passengers also aboard the flight. About 30 Britons brought a case against the airline in a British court and lost. Seven are appealing to the House of Lords. Their lawyer, George Clark, last night said the French ruling provided "an encouraging precedent".

He said: "The same issues were put by the French hostages as by us. The British court found that no case could be brought for psychological damage as a result of false imprisonment, but the French ruling clearly contradicts that view." He expects the Britons' case to be heard in the middle of next year.

However, Stephen Brookes, joint organiser of the Gulf Support Group, which is seeking compensation for 3,000 British victims of the 1990-91 conflict, said the French case had "mucked things up".

He said: "This ruling merely blurs the issue. The judgment is a farce and all that will happen is that cases will just get bogged down."

The French high court judge, Pierre Renard-Payen, said yesterday that if the cap-

ture of the British Airways hostages by Iraqi troops was "unpreventable, the events were nevertheless not unpredictable, because the territorial ambitions of Iraq were well-known and Iraqi troop movements towards the Kuwaiti border were known" on August 1, 1990, when the plane left London.

Judge Renard-Payen said the theory that the plane landed in Kuwait to deposit SAS soldiers "cannot be legally established" because the British government denied it.

Paul Merlet, his family and five relatives expect to receive about £330,000. He, his wife and their two children were held in an Iraqi munitions factory for three months. He said: "We have been engaged in legal battles for five years. Our release in October 1990 was a physical victory. Now we have won the moral one."

The airline was ordered to pay costs of more than £135,000 and to pay half the compensation immediately.

British Airways in Paris said last night: "We are considering our position with a view to appealing against what is an extraordinary decision, given in circumstances where British Airways and its crew was as much of a victim as any of the passengers."

'Dead' woman in boot

Maggie O'Kane

A 29-YEAR-OLD man has been questioned by police in Suffolk after allegedly bundling an unconscious woman into the boot of his car following a road accident.

The man stopped and released the woman when she started hammering on the boot of the car. He told her: "I thought I had killed you, so I put you in there."

Donna Hayes, who works as a waitress in a pub near her home in Wangford, Suffolk, was walking to work along the A12 at about 11am when she was hit. She said last night that she had no memory of the accident, which happened last month, nor of being bundled into the boot of the car.

After the driver released her, he told her to sit in the passenger seat and agreed to drive her to the home of a friend, some two miles away. Mrs Hayes said she drifted in and out of consciousness during the journey. She was later taken to hospital and treated for a dislocated shoulder and a blow to the head.

Mrs Hayes, who is 34 and has three children, said last night that one moment she was walking to work at the Cherry Tree Arms, and then "next thing I knew I was waking up in the pitch dark in the boot of the car".

She told the police that she did not panic immediately because, she thought it was "some sort of a practical joke. I had no panic, no fear and at the time I didn't feel any pain".

She began hammering on the boot of the car and then

she felt the car stop and a man she did not recognise opened the boot and said to her: "I thought you were dead, that's why I put you in there."

The man, who is single and works on a turkey farm, helped her into the front seat. The windscreen of the car had been shattered, and the man told Mrs Hayes that she had done it.

Mrs Hayes said that during the drive home she still was not shocked. "It just didn't register what had happened."

She said that the driver of the car appeared to her to be in shock himself. "He didn't say what he intended to do with me after the accident."

Mrs Hayes said: "I imagine he panicked." Police in Halesworth, Suffolk, have confirmed that the investigation is continuing. The man was released on bail.

Judge changes murder trial plea after death threat from loyalists

David Sharrock
Ireland Correspondent

LOYALIST paramilitaries have threatened to kill six defendants in a murder trial unless they plead guilty. Belfast Crown Court was told yesterday.

The threat against the defendants — accused of involvement in the murder of Margaret Wright in an illegal drinking club — was made by the Red Hand Commando in a coded telephone call to BBC Northern Ireland on Monday evening.

Ms Wright, an epileptic, was battered and shot by a mob at a loyalist club in south Belfast after being mistaken for a Catholic.

Details of the threat emerged after four of the defendants changed their plea to "guilty under duress". But Lord Justice Nicholson directed that pleas of not guilty be entered. "No judge could accept pleas of guilty induced by fear or menace," he said. "Courts will not tolerate any attempt to pervert the course of justice, never mind such a blatant attempt as this to undermine the principle of a fair trial."

Four defence lawyers stood down on Tuesday, saying that they were not prepared to continue but without giving further details.

Detective Chief Inspector Jimmy Molloy told the court that at 8pm on Monday a man claiming to be from the Red Hand Commando, and giving a recognised code-word, issued a statement saying: "The six accused have received a direct order from the RHC to plead guilty to the charges they face irrespective if they have a fight or not."



Margaret Wright: Killed after being mistaken for a Catholic

"The priority and main reason for this is that they have taken into account the feelings of the family of Margaret Wright."

"After the execution of Billy Elliott it was decided that no more blood be spilt. If they plead guilty they will be left in peace to serve their

time, although not in a loyalist wing."

"There is no prison in Northern Ireland that the RHC can't reach into, and they will be executed. If they don't plead guilty, their families will be put out of Ulster before the trial finishes."

"Billy Elliott's wife Allison

will be put out of Northern Ireland on her release. We had thought to execute her at the time, but we did not want to leave two children orphaned."

The accused, all from Belfast, are Stephen Robert Rules, 30, of Donegall Avenue; David John Jess, 31, of Moyles Valley; and Warren Gibson, of Matilda Gardens, who deny murder. Stephen Salbers, 23, of Lindsay Street, is accused of assisting the killers.

Christopher John Sheels, 29, of Dorchester Crescent, Glenormley, is accused of murder while Allison Elliott, 26, from Lower Rockview Street, Belfast, denies assisting offenders.

The court was told that Ms Wright, 31, was first beaten and then shot four times in the same hour on April 5 last year during a rave in a loyalist band hall.

Her near naked body was then taken away in a Wheelie bin and thrown over the back wall of a nearby derelict house.

Her mother, Evelyn, wept as the prosecution told how her daughter was taken for questioning into the store-room of the illegal drinking den before being killed. She was "severely beaten about the face and body — her ribs were broken — her neck was squeezed until the bone in her neck fractured", the court was told.

The Red Hand Commando was set up in 1972 and was declared illegal a year later at the same time as the Ulster Volunteer Force. Last September, Billy Elliott, an alleged former RHC member, was shot dead and it was claimed he had been executed for his part in Wright's murder.

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Gunnings-down occur, to a surprising degree, in clumps. Either this is a case of what you might call copy-catastrophe — the sudden elevation of one pale loner to headline status might give another pale loner ideas — or Julius Caesar's soothsayer was right about the astrological element in the deaths of leaders.

The art of assassination

Labour claims another lurch to right as minister's letter warns that new cuts will 'create more chaos'

Lilley despair at Treasury cuts

Patrick Wintour, Chief Political Correspondent

THE Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley, has privately admitted that he has been filled with despair by Treasury plans to cut his department's running costs, adding that the plan will create more chaos and only cut off the Government's nose to spite its face.

Mr Lilley's lurid admission, contained in a previously unreported letter to correspondence between him and the Chief Treasury Secretary, William Waldegrave, was cited by Labour as a further sign of a lurch to the right inside the Conservative Party as everything is subjected to the need to make room for tax cuts in the Budget.

The earlier correspondence leaked by Labour on Tuesday had shown that Mr Lilley had agreed £1 billion of spending cuts over three years as part of the just-completed public expenditure round. In addition, the letter showed Mr Lilley had been under pressure to abolish the lone parent premium for new cases and freeze its level for existing cases.

He was also being pressed to freeze one parent benefit — the top-up benefit for those in work — or even abolish the benefit altogether for new claimants.

Conservative rightwingers such as Lady Olga Maitland welcomed the cuts in lone parent benefit, arguing that Mr Lilley should go further and tax child benefit.

Labour's social security spokesman, Chris Smith, claimed the new extract revealing Mr Lilley's despair over cuts in his running costs implied that he was being asked to cut them by more than the 5 per cent being asked by the Treasury throughout Whitehall.

Mr Lilley says in the letter: "Your proposed settlement on running costs fills me with despair. The impact on operation will be devastating. Quite apart from the fall-out as service becomes more chaotic I am convinced — for reasons I've explained — that we would be cutting off our noses to spite our faces."

Mr Smith said running costs cuts on this scale would make unworkable government efforts to cut fraud. The letter showed that "Mr Major has surrendered control over policy to the right in return for the right keeping quiet about their doubts about Mr Major's leadership."

Mr Lilley himself refused to comment on the details of his settlement, but promised it would be seen to be fair and targeted at those most in need.

The letter reveals ministers are planning deep cuts in housing benefit for under-25s, cuts of up to 75 per cent in industrial injuries benefit and, in deference to the moral majoritarian Tory backbench, a long-trailed clamp-down in payments for lone parents.

The cuts come on top of an agreed programme to cut \$400 million from Mr Lilley's budget immediately, rising to £1 billion over three years.



Facing a new squeeze... social security claimants at a DSS office in Kensington, west London yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Labour faces dilemma over welfare cash

Patrick Wintour on short-term criticism which masks long-term hunt for new policies

LABOUR politicians frequently tell their welfare state gurus to think the unthinkable — but when unthinkable government thoughts are leaked to them from inside Whitehall, the same Labour politicians quickly reject them as unworkable.

Chris Smith, the new shadow social security secretary, is the latest Labour politician to promise to think the unthinkable on the £200 billion welfare budget. The implication is that Mr Smith, a moderniser, is willing to say something pretty radical, including greater targeting and a rejection of something-for-nothing benefits.

Mr Smith has been given by Labour leader Tony Blair until the next party confer-

ence to prepare a welfare state policy, but is quick to deny reports this week that his first act has been to tear up the 418 pages of the Social Justice Commission report, the study commissioned by John Smith and under scrutiny by Chris Smith's predecessor, Donald Dewar, for more than a year.

The report, widely praised for its analysis of the changing labour market and family structures, was criticised by modernisers for being too cautious. It rejected integration of all tax and benefits, and questioned a big extension of means tested benefits, pointing out that they often prove to be a disincentive to work.

However, it was radical in many areas, including child benefit and state pensions. It

proposed taxing child benefit for higher rate taxpayers, raising £300 million, and instituting a guaranteed minimum for all pensioners rather than to restore earnings linking for the basic pension.

It also suggested the replacement of student grants wholly by loans, to cover, on an income related basis, a proportion of tuition fees, as well as maintenance charges. The supplement for a spouse in unemployment benefit would be abolished, and both lone parents on benefit and parents claiming means tested benefits should be required to sign on as available for at least part-time work, once their children were older. It also proposed reform of the married couple's allowance and a new unemployment benefit for part-

timers. The level of the minimum pension was unstated, as were almost all benefit levels, although subsequent leaks suggested a minimum pension of £20 a week.

Since then Frank Field, the influential Labour chairman of the social security select committee, has been pushing his own agenda within the Doherty Commission, the Liberal Democrat version of the Social Justice Commission. Doherty proposed compulsory savings so that every pensioner gains pensions from the National Insurance Scheme and from occupational or pension schemes.

Mr Field also argues income support should be transformed into a pro-active agency which encourages all claimants, capable of work to

draw a up a career plan which they would hope to achieve. Money raised as part of abolishing student grants would be used to implement a universal child care scheme. He also proposes a new medical care scheme for the old in which state help for the ill is not allocated according to lack of savings, but medical need.

Malcolm Wicks, the newly appointed spokesman on family policy within Labour's social security team, is likely to be as key a figure in the next few months as Mr Field. His anti-means testing views are most recently set out in a Fabian pamphlet *The Active Society*, in which he argues the need for long-term care in old age as the great task of the welfare state.

Blair's 'real lead' put at 17pc

Martin Linton

LABOUR's lead over the Conservatives is only 17 per cent, according to ICM's first monthly telephone poll which replaces its face-to-face polls from today.

The poll puts Labour on 47 per cent, the Conservatives on 30 and the Liberal Democrats on 19 — still enough to give Tony Blair a huge overall majority in Parliament if an election were held now.

But it falls a long way short of the Labour lead of 39.5 per cent in last week's Gallup poll, one of the largest leads recorded by any party in the history of opinion polling.

Part of the reason is that the Daily Telegraph headlines unadjusted figures, but even when they are put on an adjusted basis, like the Guardian's figures, Gallup still puts Labour 31.5 points ahead.

The huge gap between ICM and Gallup is likely to be caused in part by different polling methods, a point of increasing contention between pollsters as the election approaches.

The Guardian and ICM have switched to telephone polling because of the mounting evidence that it is more accurate. For many years telephone polling was regarded as less reliable, but telephone penetration has now reached 91 per cent and it has become much easier to reach a random sample of telephone users by random-digit dialling.

It is not yet clear why telephone polls should be more accurate. It may be because pollsters call people back if they are out for the first call. This may correct the "availability bias" which works against Conservatives; there is a tendency for people who are often out to be considered more Conservative. The other possibility is that people answer questions more frankly on the telephone.

According to respondents in ICM's last three face-to-face polls, and indeed MORI's and Gallup's last three polls, more people voted Labour than Conservative at the last general election.

MORI respondents say they voted Con 38 Lab 42 ICM face-to-face respondents Con 38 Lab 43 and Gallup Con 38 Lab 45; whereas the result was almost the reverse.

But respondents in ICM's two latest telephone polls say they voted Con 43.5 Lab 37 — very close to the actual result, Con 43 Lab 35.

If telephone polls are more accurate, it seems likely that Labour leads of 30-40 per cent are little more than a fantasy.

Voting intention

Adjusted

Excluding don't knows

Aug Sep Oct Nov

Lab 48 49 49 47

Con 31 31 31 30

LDem 17 17 17 19

Other 5 5 5 4

Lab lead 17 18 18 17

Unadjusted

Excluding don't knows

Aug Sep Oct Nov

Lab 55 55 57 51

Con 22 22 22 28

LDem 14 14 15 19

Other 7 7 7 2

Lab lead 33 33 32 23

Lib Dems offer their own Queen's Speech

Rebecca Smithers Political Correspondent

THE Liberal Democrats yesterday published their alternative to the Queen's Speech next week, which will provide the framework for its campaigning in the run-up to the general election.

Their leader Paddy Ashdown said it was up to the opposition parties to challenge the Government by "cutting the waffle" and setting out clear policies that would "face the challenges of the next century and the next millennium".

Central to the legislative package proposed is a Great Reform Bill, which would provide a modern constitution through the introduction of proportional representation, Scottish and Welsh parliaments, English regional assemblies and an elected House of Lords.

It would also bring quangos within the framework of democratic accountability.

While the Government would show in next Wednesday's speech outlining its legislative programme that it

was out of ideas, Labour would be "strong on opposition, but weak on proposition".

By contrast, Mr Ashdown claimed, the Liberal Democrat alternative Queen's Speech set out "a clear, coherent and radical set of bills designed to invest in people, clean up the mess in politics and build for the long term prosperity of the country".

Mr Ashdown said that what the Government had in store for the rest of this parliament would never address Britain's problems.

"It is a shambolic programme, a fag end programme, a mishmash cobbled together by a government that increasingly resembles a ragged army, led by a lost leader in full scale retreat from its own errors."

Also in the speech are proposals for:

- An Education and Training Bill to provide free nursery education for all children and introduce a general teachers' council to promote high standards in education and the professional status of teachers.
- A Health of the Nation Bill to abolish charges for eye and

dental checks and establish a national inspectorate of health and social services.

- A Housing and Homelessness Bill to allow local authorities to use the receipts from the sale of council houses to fund the construction of social housing.
- A Crime Prevention Bill to create an independent chief inspector of police and require every local authority to produce a crime reduction plan.

- A Child Maintenance Bill to repeal the Child Support Act.
- A Declaration of Rights Bill to introduce a bill of rights and incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law.
- A Local Government Bill to abolish capping and introduce local income tax.
- A Public Investment Bill to reform Treasury rules to allow public sector organisations such as the Post Office to operate with greater commercial freedom.
- A Transport Bill to re-establish public control of Railtrack and establish a National Rail Authority to achieve transport, environmental and efficiency targets.

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Government accepts tougher pollution target, but it could take 10 years to meet it



War in the air... Cyclists, among the most vulnerable of road users, are offered a variety of anti-pollution masks to avoid the worst effects of car exhausts PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILLITOE

25 deaths a day hastened by exhaust dust

Paul Brown
Environment Correspondent

MINUTE particles of dust in vehicle exhausts are hastening the deaths of between five and 25 people a day, the Government accepted yesterday when panels of its own experts urged tougher limits on pollution.

The menace of PM10s (particulate matter less than 10 microns in diameter — a micron is a millionth of a metre) has only recently been established by scientists, and there is

no known safe limit, but yesterday the government panel recommended 50 parts per billion — a figure regularly exceeded in towns and cities.

The National Asthma Campaign welcomed the standard, but regarded it as only a first step in safeguarding the 200,000 people in the UK disabled by asthma. "There must be more research and long-term practical measures, not short-term technical fixes," the campaign said.

The AA said motoring and fuel manufacturers were already taking steps to cut particulates. It believed PM10s would be steadily reduced.

The particles occur naturally but are increased dramatically by human activities and in cities by vehicle exhausts. Their presence has a damaging effect on the health of people with existing heart and lung problems.

The 50 parts per billion target has been accepted in principle by the Government but it may take 10 years or more to meet it. The largest single emitter of PM10s is diesel. Diesel cars take 21 per cent of the market following advice five years ago that they

caused less carbon dioxide pollution.

Three reports were released yesterday on pollution and its effect on health. The first, by the Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards, is one of a series designed to recommend air quality standards for Britain. The Government is expected to accept them all as targets but the time scale has yet to be decided.

The report showed that in 1993 in Bloomsbury, London, the proposed 50 ppb limit for PM10s over 24 hours was exceeded on 27 days. Belfast was worst with 45, Birmingham 24,

Cardiff 19, and Edinburgh 12. Pollution is worst at the roadside, where 70 per cent of particulates come from vehicles, 60 per cent of these from diesels.

A second report, reviewing the evidence on particulates and health, found that PM10s were as bad as US scientists suggested. Depending on which study is given prominence, deaths hastened in Britain as a result of PM10s vary between 2,000 and 10,000 a year. The Department of Health's scientists said more work was needed to be more precise. All those

affected appeared to be people who were already ill. It was not yet known whether healthy people were affected. The best advice they could offer those affected was to avoid pollution or increase their medication.

The third report was on the health effects of exposure to mixtures of air pollutants. This found that different pollutants could be added together to show that vulnerable people would be affected. There was no evidence that mixed pollutants caused more damage than the same quantity of one pollutant.

Ailing and failing schools 'take years to improve'

Donald MacLeod
Education Correspondent

PUPILS in poor areas can succeed against the odds but it takes years, not months, to turn round a failing school, the National Commission for Education warned yesterday.

School inspectors demanded improvements "more or less overnight" said Margaret Maden, co-author of a report on 11 schools in disadvantaged areas showing that academic results began improving only after years of hard work.

The Office for Standards in Education had to be "a lot clearer over what can be expected in one or two years". That might be long enough to begin raising a school's morale and laying foundations for improvement — but it could be several more years before that was reflected in exam performance, said Professor Maden, of Keele University, in the report by the independent commission.

"The pace is bumpy and uncertain and is often a matter of two steps forward, one step back. Are we allowing in our calculations how much and how quickly ailing and failing schools can improve?"

Her comments came a week after Hackney Downs School in east London was recommended for closure by a government "hit-squad", a year after Ofsted found it to be failing. Ms Maden, formerly Warwickshire's director of education, did not dispute that closure, saying the school was surplus to requirements.

An Ofsted spokesman said inspectors and ministers were clear that schools had to show they could make the necessary improvements. Two had already shown they could do this and had been taken off the list of failing schools. "For children whose education is being blighted by a weak school, improvements that take longer than two years will be too late."

The report identifies good leadership by the headteacher as the heart of an effective school. A head "more than anyone else has the capacity to bring about... a release of energy and a belief in the school's potential to succeed".

Other factors common to the improving schools were:

- Improvements in the physical environment, which

boosted both staff and pupils' self-esteem;

- Good pupil behaviour and clarity in a school's policy, which was more important than, for example, dress code;
- Setting standards and careful monitoring of progress against targets;
- Parents encouraged to work with the school, helping their children learn;
- "Irresistible optimism" and constant striving for improvement.

The 11 schools in the study were: Fair Furlong primary, Bristol; Crowcroft Park primary, Manchester; Blaengwrach primary, Cwmwra, West Glamorgan; Columbia primary, London; Lochgelly North special school, Fife; Burnwood secondary for girls, London; Haywood high, Stoke on Trent; Hazelwood integrated College, Newtownabbey, Northern Ireland; St Michael's RC comprehensive, Billingham, Teesside; The Sutton Centre, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire; Selly Park girls school, Birmingham.

Success Against the Odds — Effective Schools in Disadvantaged Areas; Routledge, 1995.

Choir goes on strike over vicar's ukulele

Edward Pilkington

ALL Saints Parish Church in Bedworth, Warwickshire, is likely to be silent this Sunday after a row between the vicar and his choir led to a mass walk-out.

The church choir has gone on strike in protest at the Rev Ian Hobbs's attempts to add sparkle to the service.

Bert Willis, who has been in the choir for 31 years, said: "He wanted folk music and ukuleles instead of the organ. That's going too far."

The row blew up soon after Mr Hobbs's arrival in the parish in February. Among the reforms were cuts to psalm singing and a proposal to end the recessional hymn at the close of the service.

Mr Hobbs said: "There is a need to be more effective in the communication of God's love. We are not a club for our own benefit."

But there seems to be no resolution in sight. "This is the end of the choir. We're finished," said Mr Willis.

Women stay abroad longer than men on business trips and holidays but spend less

James Meikle, Community Affairs Editor

BRITISH women took longer holidays and business trips abroad last year than men but spent less money when they got there, government figures revealed yesterday.

Middle-aged men were the highest spenders, running up bills averaging £12 per night more than women, and business travellers spent more than twice as much per night as holidaymakers.

Travel Trends, a report by the Central Statistical Office, also found that spending by Britons on average was far

lower than that of foreign visitors to this country.

Figures based on 226,000 interviews with travellers passing through passport control suggested Britons were abroad for 11 nights, spending £263 each trip or just over £22 per night while visitors here spent on average nine nights, £467 per visit and just over

£50 per night. Spending on business trips averaged £72.70 per night compared with holiday spending of £32.50, although holiday stays were nearly twice as long — 11 nights to six.

Men aged between 45 and 54 were the highest spending Britons at more than £46 per night while women of the

same age spent just under £34. In this age group women spent nearly two nights more than men on each trip.

Holidays accounted for more than two-thirds of all trips abroad, with business the second main reason for travel, and visiting friends and relatives third.

The number of foreign trips by Britons has more than doubled in 20 years to 40 million a year and spending has risen 15 times to £14.5 billion. The number of visits to Britain has doubled to 21 million in the same period, with spending rising eight times to £9.9 billion.

Travel Trends, HMSO £25

3 held after 'gay' killing in city park

Geoffrey Gibbs

POLICE are questioning three men in Plymouth in connection with a suspected homophobic attack in the city's Central Park that left one man dead and another fighting for his life.

The assault, which happened shortly after midnight on Monday in an area frequented by homosexual men, has shocked the city's gay community.

The dead man was named yesterday as Frederick Donald "Terry" Sweet, aged 54, from the North Prospect area of Plymouth. A post-mortem revealed Mr Sweet had died from multiple injuries to his head and body. He had also suffered cuts to his face and genitals from a sharp knife.

Detectives have not yet identified the injured man, who was in a critical condition in Plymouth's Derriford hospital last night. He is aged between 40 and 50 and is described as clean-shaven and balding.

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Magnet Food for thought

GU 6

Model army wife fears widowhood

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

ALMA POWELL — model army wife to General Colin Powell — has climbed to the apex of the United States military — was always reluctant to risk taking a place on the macabre list of wives who dress in black to bury their husbands beneath the citadels of political power.

The couple yesterday denied security fears were crucial in Gen Powell's decision not to seek the Republican nomination for the American presidency, but admitted that safety was a factor in their "team decision".

On the morning after a remarkable television broadcast by the widow of Yitzhak Rabin, Mrs Powell is known to have made it clear to her husband that she feared the assassin's bullet more than she wished him to take a place at the head of table in the Oval Office.

According to several sources, the woman behind the man has once again intervened in US politics — although this time to pull him back from the limelight.

For all her steadfastness as a military wife, Mrs Powell was recently revealed to have been treated for depression and prescribed tranquillisers for a decade. There were also anxieties that she might not make as tailored a First Lady as she had been an army wife.

The spectre of Kitty Dukakis's alcoholism and depression might have hung over a Powell campaign.

Mrs Powell was manifestly ill at ease with the crush of publicity that surrounded the recent publication of the general's book, a discomfort which contrasted with her ready smile during his leadership of Operation Desert Storm against Iraq.

Indeed, her courage on the home front while her husband set off for Vietnam in 1968 has become part of US legend. She asked him to take her out to dinner the night before his departure on a second tour of duty. He took her to the snazziest hotel in

Birmingham, Alabama, from which blacks had been barred until a few years previously. At the end of the meal, Major Powell handed his wife a sealed letter. It contained instructions for arrangements in the event of his death.

While Maj Powell fought in the jungle, his wife stayed behind in "Bombingham", as the black neighbourhoods were called. Her father would sit up all night with a shotgun on his lap as mobs roamed the streets; he was a high school principal in days when black schools were bombed and set aflame.

It is the present-day incarnation of those white extremists that Mrs Powell is said to fear. One friend said she remains "seared inside" by that racial violence.

In the presidential campaign, the nominees will have secret service despatches and bodyguards trained to the same level as the president's. But Mrs Powell said in a television interview last September that her husband "would probably be at much more risk than any other candidate because of being a black man in this society. There are a lot of crazy people out there."

Gen Powell told the black affairs magazine *Ebony*: "Whatever I do, we will do as a team." He said his wife's view would make up "51 per cent" of his decision on whether to run for president.

Yesterday, Gen Powell made clear that family considerations influenced his decision. The couple watched the CNN broadcast by Yitzhak Rabin's wife, Leah, on Tuesday in which the widow spoke of her sorrow. Mrs Powell had watched similar appearances by a series of widows in her own country — Coretta King and Betty Shabazz (Malcolm X's widow), Jackie and Ethel Kennedy buried the US's most esteemed president and his brother.

Betty Ford and Nancy Reagan saw their husbands become the target of assassination attempts, while Hillary Clinton heard the crack of gunfire in the White House grounds last year.



Non-rumour... Retired general Colin Powell, pictured last month in London, announced yesterday he did not 'feel the calling' to run for president

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID SILITOE

Republicans relieved at strategic withdrawal

Polls cheer Democrats

Jonathan Freedland in Washington

FROM New Hampshire to Tennessee, wherever a Republican candidate had pitched camp, there came a loud, collective sigh of relief. As soon as word came that retired general Colin Powell was not entering the race for the Republican Party's presidential nomination, the 10 men of the Republican field could breathe again.

Until now their campaigns had been on hold, waiting for the general to make his move. Now the Republicans have to face the reality from which Gen Powell had provided welcome distraction: they are left

with perhaps the most lacklustre crop of candidates the party has ever fielded.

The immediate beneficiary is the Senate majority leader, Bob Dole, who can cling on to his precarious frontrunner status. Yesterday he received the endorsement of Stephen Merrill, the popular governor of New Hampshire — the state whose February 20 primary is the first test of the 1996 campaign.

Gen Powell had threatened to blow Mr Dole out of the water: if voters were hungry for a war hero with an instinct for consensus-building, they could have all that — and star quality.

Mr Dole's relief was audible as he spoke of his "great

respect and admiration" for Gen Powell yesterday, deploying the vocabulary politicians usually reserve for rivals who have died, lost or resigned.

Without Gen Powell's brand of moderate, Rockefeller Republicanism, Mr Dole can court the party's right wing without having to look over his left shoulder. Opponents like to say Dole support is a mile wide but an inch deep, and to note that polls show he has lost a percentage point of support every week for 20 weeks. Still, Gen Powell's withdrawal allows Mr Dole's frontrunner aura to last until New Hampshire at least.

With Gen Powell gone, media interest will light upon other candidates. Millionaire publishing tycoon Malcolm "Steve" Forbes may now get attention for his spending spree in New Hampshire and his idea of abolishing the Internal Revenue Service and replacing it with a flat tax.

Television commentator and rightwing firebrand Pat Buchanan becomes the most

charismatic speaker in the Republican race, the only candidate able to whip up a hustings audience.

Former Tennessee governor Lamar Alexander can promote himself as the only "outsider", running against a men-in-suits line-up of Washington machine politicians.

Pennsylvania senator Arlen Specter will have a moment in the sun, too: without Gen Powell, he is the only candidate to favour abortion rights — a position held by a majority of the US public.

But the bottom line is that none of Mr Dole's challengers poll more than a minnow rating. A Time/CNN survey published yesterday showed 45 per cent for Dole, with no one else reaching double digits.

This may tempt the party's ideological leader, Newt Gingrich, into the fray. He has never ruled out a presidential run, saying he wanted to wait for Gen Powell's decision. He has until December 15 — the filing deadline for New Hampshire — to decide. Paradoxically, though, the Republican faithful love Mr Gingrich so much they do not want him to run: they think he should stay on as House Speaker and complete the "Republican revolution" in Congress.

All of which spells very good news for Bill Clinton. There was loud jubilation in the White House last night, as they waved goodbye to the one candidate they had truly feared. Gen Powell was 15 points ahead of Mr Clinton, while Mr Dole and the rest of the Republican field are at least nine points behind.

Now President Clinton can rely on the black vote, which a Powell candidacy might have lured from the Democratic fold for the first time. Nor will he face the prospect of comparing his draft-dodging past with the CV of a war hero. Instead, he can look ahead to a battle against a crusty, crotchety Republican 23 years his senior. The true frontrunner in the 1996 race for the White House is the man who already lives there.

DEMOCRATIC ebullience over Colin Powell's decision not to seek the US presidency was boosted yesterday when local election results confirmed a Democratic meltdown in the bastion of the south, writes Jonathan Freedland in Washington.

Democrats retained their 24-year grip on the governor's mansion of Kentucky — albeit by the narrowest margin in two decades — when Paul Patton defeated his Republican opponent by 51 to 49 per cent.

Republicans also failed to win both chambers of the state legislature of Virginia — which would have marked a first for the Republicans in the south.

In the big cities, Democratic mayors were re-elected with large majorities. Ed Rendell of Philadelphia, Bob Lanier of Houston and Kurt Schmoke in Baltimore all won with more than 70 per cent.

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will also be required. A suitable level term assurance policy will also be required for FEP or pension plan mortgages. An indemnity policy, for which you will need to pay an arrangement fee, will be required where the mortgage exceeds the Society's normal maximum percentage advance of 75%. If the mortgage is either redeemed (in full or in part) or transferred to another scheme before the fourth anniversary of the date on which interest is first charged in respect of the mortgage, the value of the cashback you have received must be repaid in full and a redemption fee equal to the spread made as a result of the discount will be charged. The redemption fee will be subject to a maximum charge equivalent to a monthly interest calculated at the rate payable at the time of repayment. The Cashback may offset personal liability to Capital Gains Tax. All mortgages are subject to status, valuation and a minimum age of 18. A written quotation is available on request from any branch or from Woolwich Building Society, Dept 15, Corporate HQ, Watling Street, Barkinghouse, Kent DA6 7RL. The Woolwich Building Society represents only the Woolwich Marketing Group, which is regulated by the Personal Investment Authority for life assurance and unit trust business. CBS

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GL08 11

Face-saving deal bolsters Bosnia peace force

Russians to serve under US general

John Palmer in Brussels

RUSSIA is to send 2,000 combat troops to Bosnia under American command.

to help NATO implement a future peace settlement there. If Russia and the United States can agree on an overall system of political control for the peace implementation operation in Bosnia, it will be the first time Russian troops serve alongside NATO and under US command. If successful, NATO hopes this will lead to future Russian participation in other Western-led military missions.

In an agreement reached yesterday, Moscow insisted on a complex arrangement to ensure none of its soldiers come under direct NATO command.

Instead the Russian troops will take orders from NATO's American supreme military commander, General George Joulwan, who also doubles as the supreme commander of US forces in Europe.

It is in this latter capacity that Gen Joulwan will be able

to give orders to the single Russian combat brigade through a Russian deputy commander, General Leonid Shavtsov. The purpose of this sleight of hand is to preserve NATO's overall command of the operation while allowing the Russian government to tell its people that it has preserved its independence from NATO.

When he emerged after discussions with the Russian defence minister, General Pavel Grachev, at NATO headquarters in Brussels yesterday, the US defence secretary, William Perry, claimed the agreement would ensure the effectiveness of the 60,000-strong peace implementation force.

"This plan preserves the unity of command of the [peace force]," Mr Perry declared. "We have approved this plan and have asked our military commanders to work out the details."

"The Russian brigade in Bosnia will be part of an American division," Mr Perry told journalists later. Asked whether, stripped of rhetoric, the reality was that Russian troops would take

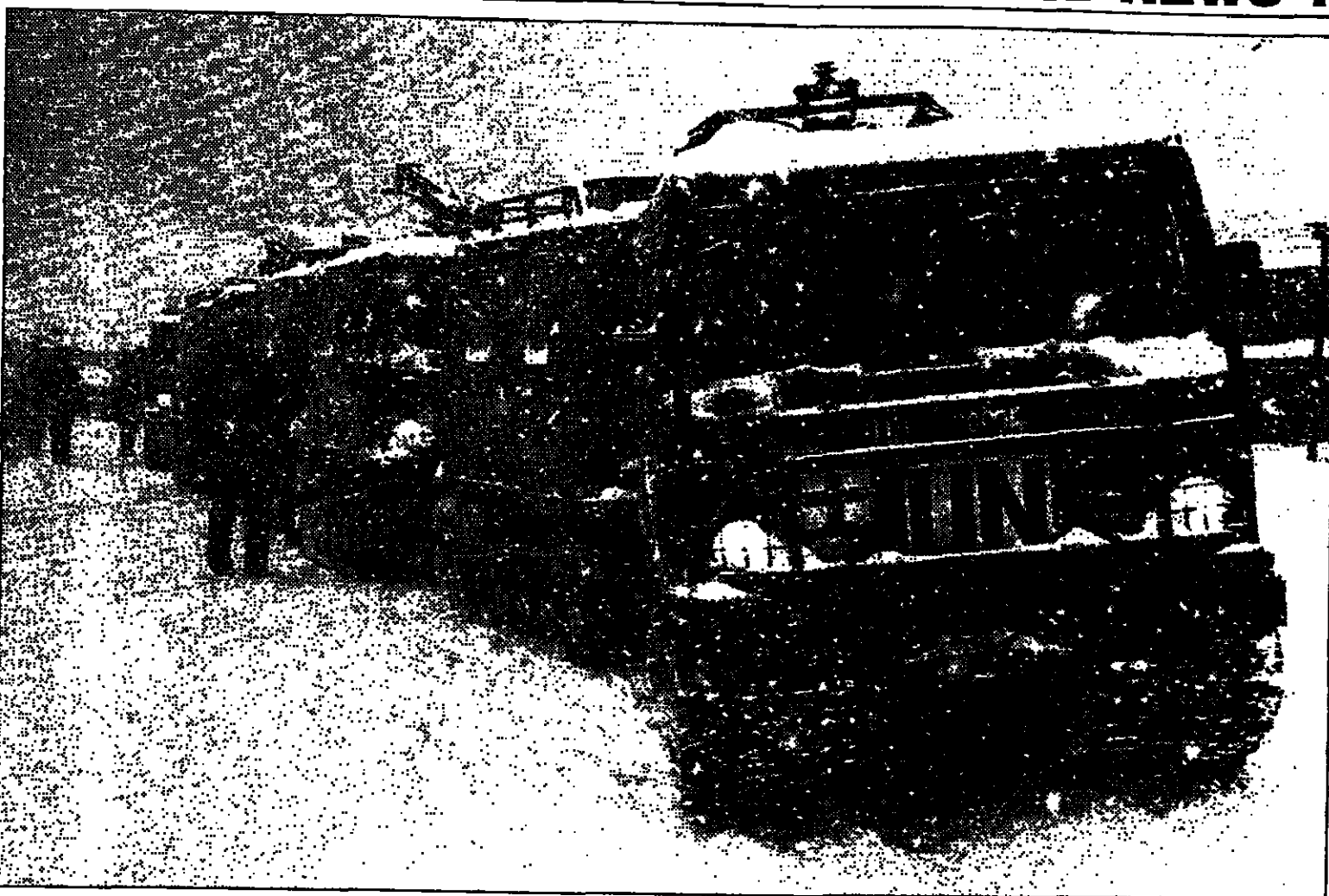
orders from a NATO commander, Mr Perry replied: "No."

Gen Grachev insisted that Russian troops would in no way come under NATO control. "All the conditions which have been set by Russia for participation in this force have been met," Gen Grachev said. "Russian forces will not come under NATO command."

The agreement between NATO and Russia is still conditional on an overall accord about political control of the Bosnia operation.

The Russian government insists that a committee including representatives of NATO, the United Nations and non-aligned countries should have overall authority over the peace implementation force. This is rejected by NATO, which retains bitter memories of the confusion and disagreements arising from the "dual key" joint command by NATO and the UN over peacekeeping forces in Bosnia.

The new Russian combat brigade will complement a force of 2,000 logistical personnel previously agreed by Moscow.



Winter kills... Dutch UN vehicles ferry injured Bosnian soldiers for treatment by a British army field ambulance on Mount Igman after an accident on the icy roads in which three men died. The sudden onset of winter has seen the temperature sink below -15C in the mountains. Aid workers say Muslims and Croats evicted from Serb-held towns are sleeping rough in heavy snows. Thousands of expelled Serbs may also be vulnerable.

Berlusconi aide on Mafia charge

John Hooper in Rome

ONE of Silvio Berlusconi's senior lieutenants in Sicily was arrested yesterday, on a charge of Mafia conspiracy. Francesco Musotto, head of the provincial government of Palermo and a leading member of Mr Berlusconi's right-wing Forza Italia movement, was accused of having helped Italy's most wanted man.

His arrest in a dawn raid infuriated Mr Berlusconi. The billionaire politician called on President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro and the speakers of the two houses of parliament to step in "to defend democracy".

"They can and must intervene efficiently, urgently and rapidly to prevent the administration of criminal justice being used for partisan political ends," Mr Berlusconi said. Two of his deputies are already under investigation for alleged Mafia links.

The TV magnate-turned-politician has repeatedly insisted that he and his party are the objects of a vendetta by leftwing prosecutors bent on preventing his return to power. Mr Berlusconi was Italy's prime minister for seven months last year.

His position is especially vulnerable at the moment. Last month, he failed for the second time to dislodge his predecessor, Lamberto Dini. Next January, he is due to face trial on bribery charges.

This is not the first time that Forza Italia ("Come on Italy") has been accused of having been infiltrated by the Sicilian Mafia. Mr Berlusconi's political opponents made such allegations during the campaign leading to last year's general election, in which his party topped the polls. Then, as now, he vehemently rejected the claims.

Mr Musotto, aged 48, was arrested with his brother and three others. A former Socialist and the son of a law professor at Palermo University, Mr Musotto is also a prominent lawyer who has defended numerous Mafia bosses.

The prosecutors who requested his arrest alleged he had helped the Cosa Nostra by supplying it with privileged information about the courts' activities. But the most sensational accusation is that, on at least three occasions, he and his brother sheltered the fugitive "godfather", Leoluca Bagarella. Police believe Bagarella was then in control of the foremost Mafia "family", the Corleonesi. He was arrested last June.

Defence lawyers in Palermo went on strike yesterday in protest at the arrest of Mr Musotto who, they said, had been "struck by a slanderous accusation which we don't believe".

Their protest was expected to interrupt several Mafia trials in Palermo, including that of the former prime minister, Giulio Andreotti.

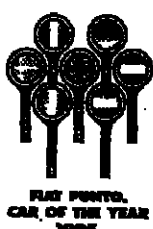


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Warm words, cold deeds

Tories and Labour are both muddled over benefits

THE latest Tory social security proposals are not just unfair but "devastating". Who says so? Peter Lilley, the minister who will have to implement them. The most revealing aspect of the latest Whitehall leak is not the new Treasury proposals — we have had 16 years of them — but the reaction of one of the most far right cabinet members. Mr Lilley has not gone native. He has his own year-by-year programme to slash the social security budget. But his reaction to the Treasury sounds more like a Labour than a Conservative response. The squeeze on his department's running costs "fills me with despair. The impact on operations will be devastating." His opposition to Treasury proposals to abolish One Parent Benefit and further cuts to housing benefits is almost as strong.

There is a lesson here for all Conservatives. If Mr Lilley is ready to resist this assault on the poor because of the damage to the image of "one nation" Toryism, why is the cabinet endorsing it? Mr Lilley is no softie, yet he clearly recognises important political calculations need to be made in weighing up the benefits of tax cuts against the cost of public expenditure reductions.

The latest proposals contradict Mr Lilley's criteria for reforming welfare: meeting today's needs; focusing on those in greatest need; affordability. Targeting single parents is singling out the poorest people in the community. Removing the lone parent £5.20 premium may not seem much, but to someone receiving only £78-a-week on benefits this is a large reduction. Pushing for the abolition of One Parent Benefit is even cruder: this is one benefit which does provide a hand-up rather than a hand-out because it can still be claimed by people who move from welfare to work. In Mr Lilley's own words: "the risks of going further down the list (of cuts) simply do not

justify the modest additional savings."

Mr Lilley is a much under-estimated minister. We disagree with his analysis of the "unbearable" demographic demands on welfare, but he has been quite open about his strategy: a step by step approach to pre-empt opposition allied to the tactic of reducing eligibility rather than cutting benefit levels. In Tory terms, he has been extremely successful manoeuvring his "re-adjustments" to various benefits through Parliament without revolt. But now the Treasury is cutting across his strategy with its imposition of benefit level cuts. It is no longer clear where the Tory party wants to go beyond the crude wish to slash taxes. What was once coherent has become incoherent — as well as a contradiction of all those warm words from John Major on caring, classlessness, compassion.

Yet the same incoherence charge can be laid against Labour too. It is now a year since its Social Justice Commission (Borrie) was published but the party decided this week to have another six-month long re-think. Borrie may, as a Labour insider noted this week, have been "good on analysis but poor on proposals" but there is no simple quick-fix to welfare, as Borrie demonstrated. If there was one Big Idea, it would have been discovered years ago by the army of poverty policy-makers. What Labour needs to do is a Lilley in reverse: a gradual but radical reverse of the inequalities generated by ministers, an inequality which has grown faster and further than in any comparable developed state. Labour has still not responded to Roy Hattersley's Summer criticism that it was becoming too preoccupied with the problems of the middle classes at the expense of the needs of the disadvantaged and dispossessed. Rethinking the unthinkable looks more like buying time than making policy.

Nigeria and a bunch of thugs

Swift and firm action is needed to save Ken Saro-Wiwa

DEATH WAS THE outrageous verdict on Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight fellow-accused in Nigeria: now the generals have compounded the outrage by confirming the sentence. They have done so with typical arrogance on the eve of the Commonwealth Conference. This timing may be of small consequence compared to the enormity of the decision, but it shows the extent to which this bunch of thugs believes it can get away, literally, with murder. Unfortunately they have been encouraged in these expectations by the nodding and winking connivance which has, for example, ensured that Britain continues to send arms to Nigeria in spite of EU sanctions adopted two years ago.

Nigeria's cynical affront to the Heads of Government now gathering in Auckland must be met by the toughest possible response. If it were ever possible to finesse the issue General Abacha has now issued a challenge which, if ducked, will destroy the remaining spirit — or more — of the Commonwealth. The Nigerian dictator has deprived the feeble-hearted of the excuse to argue that quiet pressure might be more effective as long as the sentence is not confirmed. Cynically his tame military council declares its "complete satisfaction" with the tribunal which it set up — and unanimous acceptance of a verdict which it desired. Britain cites its leading role in the Commonwealth as one of the prime credentials for asserting a global status: now it is time to lead. So far Britain's response to the

abuse of law in Ogoniland has been pathetic. The trial, though devoid of legality, has merely been described as "flawed." After the death sentence was announced British officials shamefully predicted that the verdict would not "materially affect the situation" in Aukland. The generals have exploded that feeble pretence. Mr Major muttered something on his way to the conference yesterday about joining the call for "swift action to deal with countries that break human rights standards". Swift action is indeed what is needed, but not just talk about it. Nigerian human rights organisations — and Ken Saro-Wiwa Jnr in Aukland — have made a very simple proposal for effective action: to suspend Nigeria from Commonwealth meetings and impose full economic sanctions. That should be at the top of the agenda.

If the Commonwealth heads need a text on which to rely, they only have to consult the Harare Declaration which sets out a course for taking the Commonwealth into the next century which they are pledged to implement. This reaffirms a basic principle set out more than 20 years ago: the Commonwealth affirms the individual's right to participate in "framing the society in which he or she lives" by means of free and democratic political processes. And it commits the organisation to work "with renewed vigour" for its fundamental values. From John Major to Nelson Mandela, Nigeria is a challenge they cannot evade.

The digital age of the satellite

Remember the days when you could watch sport on TV?

RUPERT Murdoch's BSkyB is reportedly planning a deal which will end the BBC's coverage of the Five Nations rugby championship. Earlier this week his Fox subsidiary was involved in a \$1.7 billion contract to broadcast big baseball games in addition to American football, hockey and Ryder Cup golf. It is commonly believed that the eight "listed events" like the Cup Final and Wimbledon tennis are beyond Mr Murdoch's reach. Not so. They are only off limits to pay-by-view channels, not to subscription channels like BSkyB. Even his severest critics would admit that Mr Murdoch, who lost huge sums in the early days, can't be castigated for making profits now. As he points out, any other corporation is free to bid against him. So that's all right then.

Not quite. Sure, the digital age will give BSkyB hundreds of channels with which to broadcast all Premier League games at once. But this doesn't mean

they have to scoop the field. When events formerly seen by well over ten million people are suddenly restricted to a fee-paying minority, then the utilitarian principle of doing the greatest good for the greatest number is suspended at least until most homes have been converted to subscriber-TV. There are alternatives. Is it desirable that one company should have a near-monopoly of great sporting events? Why shouldn't the BBC increase its £86.50 subscription (much lower than BSkyB's) to bid against Murdoch to broadcast big sporting events free to all? Why doesn't the Government add more events to the protected list as long as they have the potential to be broadcast to at least three quarters of the population? If nothing is done the listed events will soon become an endangered species and the principles of universal and affordable access to the multimedia revolution will be turned upside down.



Letters to the Editor

Rabin and the rabbis

MINGLED with pain at Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, I feel outrage at the self-righteous belittlement of that minority of Israelis and Diaspora Jews who fanned the flames (Flickers of hope, November 8).

To put it bluntly, I find it hard to see them as Jews. By cloaking themselves in the Bible, by using fascist rhetoric to describe Judea and Samaria as the "Jewish heartland", they have attempted to intimidate the majority of Jews, and literally got away with murder.

But their zealotry is only one strand of Jewish tradition, and one which many Jews refuse. An Israeli school teacher recently refused to take his pupils to Masada because he wants to offer them a better role model for today than heroic mass suicide. A contemporary of the martyrs of Masada, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakai, was spirited out of besieged Jerusalem and founded rabbinical Judaism, with its inheritance of continual reinterpretation, inquiry, questioning.

This spiritual stream of Jewishness does not place territory above people. It's at least as valid as nationalism

hooliganism dressed in Old Testament clothing. Michael Krustow, Shepherds Hill, London NE6.

STEVE BELL'S cartoon (November 7), depicting Rabin's killer hand-in-hand with Himmler, does nothing to help us understand the mind of the killer or those like him. Their ideas are the exaggerated development of an intolerant, exclusivist and messianic strand within Judaism. To be fair to Bell, it is up to rabbis and not cartoonists to sort this out. A heavy burden rests on their shoulders. Sadly, many Orthodox rabbis in Britain contributed to the demonisation of Rabin which prepared the way for his assassination. It is high time that the leadership of the rabbinate openly condemned these preachers of hate. David Cesarani, Somers Road, London NW2.

WHY do you say (Editorial, November 6) that the Israeli state's practice of assassinating its enemies is "a dubious proposition both in tactical and moral terms"? No one can be in any serious

doubt that such a practice is murder, illegal and regarded by most sane people as morally wrong. Yitzhak Rabin's killer will no doubt say that he acted to save Israel. Rabin no doubt approved Fathi Shuqai's murder on the same basis. Isn't it about time to doubt a bit less and condemn a bit more? John Spencer, Earlsfield Road, London SW18.

IT IS ironic that I, a Jordanian Arab, write to condemn the assassination of Rabin. Whether they like it or not, Israelis and Arabs are now united by a new mutual bond: the future of the region. Yet Arabs and Israelis are also challenged by a mutual threat: religious extremism. Israelis and Arabs are surrounded by seas in which myopic sharks devour liberal-minded Arabs and Jews. If we as lay citizens cannot confront extremists' vile acts, we should at least distance ourselves from their actions, physically and intellectually. Dr. Avy Minner Al-Rimawi, Law Department, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE.

Ordtec scandal offers enough ammunition to hurt the minister

TOGETHER with the Matrix Churchill trials, this latest episode involving directors of Ordtec (Lilley hid Iraqi arms guilt, November 8) shows Her Majesty's Government and the self-proclaimed party of law and order to hold these principles in utter contempt. Mr Lilley will doubtless tell us that dose chests deserve to face the full rigours of the law, while ministers get away with interfering with the course of justice.

The public have given up expecting ministers to do the decent thing, so perhaps the judge can call on them to explain why they signed these Public Interest Immunity Certificates. If they are not able to give a satisfactory explanation, they should face a fine, imprisonment, or both. (Cllr) Kevin Peters, 67 Napier Road, Southsea, Portsmouth, Hants PO5 2RA.

DOUGLAS Hurd has cleared my conscience of any scruples I may have had about supplementing my income with some part-time armed robbery.

For in the wake of the Ordtec appeal he told the nation's TV audience that the Public Interest Immunity Certificates signed by him and his then Cabinet colleague Peter Lilley were irrelevant to the original trial as they had never actually been used. That seems to me like a bank robber pleading innocence because he never actually fired the gun he used in the hold-up. So, Douglas, it's off to the NatWest for me, to take out a "permanent loan". Know a good arms dealer I could get a gun from? Mike Starke, Town Lane, Chisle Green, Isle of Wight.

I WONDER whether the much-delayed Scott Report will now be the subject of a Public Interest Immunity Certificate. Phil Marshall, 32 Five Acres, Stoke Holy Cross, Norwich, Norfolk.

IT MAY be time to seek alternative ways in which advocacy in Parliament can legitimately take place (Tories routed on MPs' rules, November 7). Replace the hereditary Lords with democratically selected representatives of the major institutions, the trades unions, the professions, the large charities/voluntary bodies and the commercial interest lobbies. As it would be these members' function to promote in Parliament the bodies they represent, there would be little point in even thinking about recruiting Commons MPs to perform the task. Gordon Holt, Jordans Place, May Hill, Glos GL1 0NL.

ALAN DUNCAN (Arena, November 6) deserves our gratitude for blowing the whistle on New Labour's sordid plans. A Parliament whose members receive a salary paid for out of taxpayers' money, and who only have an obligation to respond to their constituents — this is creeping Stalinism. Only when the range of political products are subject to the same requirements for competitive tendering as other so-called "public services" will Parliament become aware of the concerns of the real world. J Hopkin, Department of Politics, University of Durham, Town Lane, Durham DH1 1TA.



Lice, damn lice and statistics

MY DAUGHTERS attend an inner-London school (Ox-kidding, November 8). Since nursery, they have had annual infestations of head lice for prolonged periods. I have long since given up chemical treatments. This was in part because of the pesticides they contain, but also because they simply do not work. Lice have developed a resistance to these treatments which means that no product gives a 100 per cent kill rate of eggs and eggs a fact that must be known to manufacturers.

With no public-health education to co-ordinate "bug-busting" campaigns, and no effective treatment, families are left with the task of combing "nit picking" through each other's hair. I only wish we were imagining it. Name and address supplied.

THE lice treatment, carbaryl, was first synthesised in 1953 and reports about its carcinogenic effects appeared in 1970. Other information about possible mutagenic,

reproductive, neurological and immunological effects of carbaryl has been available for at least a decade. It seems strange that the new policy had to be triggered by more evidence from the manufacturers about carcinogenicity test in labs and not by our regulators acting on existing data and knowledge of data gaps.

What will now happen to those agricultural, horticultural and public-health workers who still use carbaryl on crops and for various pest-control purposes? In the US, data sheets on carbaryl indicate that the substance may cause mutations and may present reproductive hazards. Users there have some informed consent about which pesticides they choose to purchase. At the very least similar labels should be attached here. (Dr) Andrew Watterson, Director, Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health Policy, De Montfort University, Leicester.

Brussels 3, Guardian Euro-rebels 2

IN THEIR thought-provoking and timely article (Winds over the West, November 2), Will Hutton and Martin Kettle argue the case for a new European agenda and for putting aside the plan for a single currency. Like Giles Radice (Letters, November 8), I want the early admission of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic into the EU. But they are right that this is not possible "without breaking the CAP" and that any such attempts will be fiercely resisted.

The authors deserve to be congratulated, not scolded, for stating so boldly that "the creation of a single currency by 1999 with its convergence criteria needs to be put aside". They are right to warn of the serious dangers of deflation as a consequence of the pursuit

of Maastricht goals. With 18 million unemployed in Europe, public expenditure is being cut, taxes raised and borrowing reduced as all other policy goals are subordinated to the overriding concern to achieve the 3 per cent and 60 per cent targets set out in Maastricht. Convergence at any cost could tear the very fabric of our societies apart. It is time we stopped stifling debate with dogmatic responses and unquestioning acceptance of the received wisdom.

R. Hon Peter Shore MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

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The Starlight Express

IFEAR a possible hidden agenda in Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's bid for Express Newspapers. Ownership of the Express includes ownership of all copyright to Rupert Bear. Bearing in mind the indignities heaped on Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, can we expect Nutcracker's last to fare any better? Whether it's to be Rupert Bear: Superstar, Rupert and his Amazing Yellow-and-Black Matching Scarf and Trousers or just simply Rupert, I think (as another former Express employee used to say) we should be told. John Porter, 29 Byron Avenue, Sutton, Surrey SM1 2RA.

YOU refer (Jewels security in Heseltine sale, November 8) to Mr Heseltine's £50,000 press officer. Is this unusual, or will he be seeing repeated references to Mr Blair's press agent's pay? Peter Bottomley MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

I'M not interested in whether the Guardian would have published Courbet's L'Origine du monde if it had been a photograph (Letters, November 8). But I would be very interested to know if the Development Officer for the Association of Muslim Schools finds something inherently offensive about women's genitalia and if so, what? Jeff Wells, Mayfield Road, London NE.

YOUR Diary (November 7) attempts to relate the consumption of beef to human health problems by relying on literary references: Sir Andrew Aguecheek's belief that beef consumption "does harm to my wit". But there is also a counter-view supported by the literature. Thus: "Give them great meals of beef and iron and steel, they will eat like wolves and fight like devils" (Henry V, III, ii). And both Dickens — "I only know of two sorts of boys. Meaty boys and beef-faced boys" (Oliver Twist) — and Henry Fielding ("Oh! The roast beef of England, and old England's roast beef") are generally on the side of Henry V. (Dr) Julian Wiseman, Sur Lecturer in Animal Production, University of Nottingham, Leicestershire LE12 5RD.

Prayer in the community

REV Ian Stubbs (Letters, November 8) seems a little muddled in his "radical" approach to clergy pay. Firstly, the overwhelming majority of clergy are very much involved in teaching, caring, administering and community work, as well as theologising and spiritual leadership; so his implied job description is seriously defective. A parish priest who did nothing but lead and theologise wouldn't be worth a stipend.

Secondly, the convenient equation he makes — that a sense of vocation must equal voluntary work — is the sort of argument you might expect

to hear from a Treasury minister. Ask the teachers, dentists, doctors... need I go on? Thirdly, the idea that doing theology is somehow not real work is deeply depressing when it comes from a fellow minister.

Finally, Ian Stubbs' Panglossian optimism demonstrates me even more than the bishops' attempt to bring back the clerical equivalent of the National Dock Labour Board. (Rev) Dave Pole, St Helen's Vicarage, Gloucester Road, Alveston, Bristol BS12 2QT.

A Country Diary

WEXFORD, IRELAND: Here we were once again in Wexford for the annual Opera Festival, enchanted by the singing and the music, luxuriating in the rich agricultural land, the trees flushed and gill in their dying colours, walking the narrow lanes where once the Vikings strode, sunlight everywhere in this glorious mildness of halcyon days. We walked the grounds of Johnstown Castle Gardens, past the three lakes and through the woods and I remembered my first walk as a child along these same paths. We were driving when my mother (born and reared in Wexford Town) said to my father, "Turn in here, Frank," pointing to a high, ornamental gateway. My father, ever law-abiding, replied, "But it's private, it's a demesne." "That's all right just drive in." While my father chased us children through the woods, my mother strolled by a lake. Suddenly my father stopped dead, murmuring, "Now we're in trouble." There my mother was talking to a

white-haired old lady with a walking stick. My father, being the lawyer he was, envisaged prosecution for trespass. We quickly tidied ourselves and walked towards my mother and the other lady. My mother introduced us. "This is Lady Fitzmaurice-Fitzgerald," (the owner of Castle and demesne). Later as we went back to the car mother explained, "I knew there'd be no trouble because there's such strong feeling among Wexford people for their sea captains and sailors and especially for those like your poor grandfather (Captain Laurence Harry Murphy). Lady Fitzmaurice-Fitzgerald remembers your grandfather's loss and has given us permission to walk here whenever we like." And we did walk there and now the estate belongs to us, the people, given to us by the family. I visited briefly Wexford's North Slob — Wildfowl Reserve — and saw a pouting, chestnut-beaked, "running" on the water surface for a nest take-off.

SARAH POYNTE

Diary

Matthew Norman

ONE of the dangers of a celebrity marriage is ending up with a laughable name. It is no coincidence, for example, that Whoopi Goldberg never married the late Peter Cushing; and the same threat plagues Mr Tony Blair in his relationship with the band Blur. Already nicknamed Blair/Blur on policy grounds by right-wing pundits, the prospect of becoming the double-barrelled Tony Blair/Blur-Blair is not enticing. So I am intrigued to learn that, in the summer, he was prepared to ignore the danger. Indeed, he even invited the band's singer Damon Albarn to a secret meeting at Westminster, to ask him to affiliate himself to the party. Marriage was likely for a while, it seems, but then the music suddenly fizzled out. Mr Albarn is now telling friends that he has gone off the proposal, describing an association with New Labour as "a bit sad". Poor Mr Blair, spurned in love.

ONE of the countless examples of my sane and rational friend Paul Johnson's supernatural prescience is his 1995 prediction that no fan of pop music would ever become a British political leader. In the same book, he explained why, in 1963, a sexual revolution was inevitable. He was right. The 1968 student uprising in Paris would change the structure of our society forever. That's the thing about Paul... he never gets it wrong. Take his last column in the *Spectator*. "Colin Powell will make a fine president," it begins. It's almost spooky.

FROM the "Chuckie" column of the screws' house journal Gate-Lodge comes a story to warm Michael Howard's heart. Jailers hate young, cocky, middle-class men, and one of these — whose father was "something in Fleet Street" — drove an official mad one night by continually ringing his cell bell for spurious reasons. As Chuckie narrates, eventually "the officer stormed in, and lifted the plect by his shirt front several inches off the ground. 'What do you want this time?' he seethed. 'I want a shit,' screamed the spoiled brat. 'You've f---ed found one!' he retorted."

THE possibility that Chuckie is mistaken, and that the mystery Fleet Street figure was not a father but a friend, brings to mind the fraudster Darius Guppy. His best friend is Boris the Jackal Johnson. As the Guardian reported yesterday, Guppy has become a Muslim, and I am pleased today to explain why. The links between big-time boxing and crime are strong, and the Jackal, so moved by the prison conversion of Mike Tyson, an old pal, that he "persuaded" Darius to follow suit. As the Jackal himself puts it: "Stand to reason, Squire."

IN today's reading from the Book of the Month, we begin to see why Lord Wyatt's 1976 classic *The Exploits of Mr Sausy Squirrel* is regarded by many as the single most influential political tract since the war. Having bought his fancy waistcoat (and a bicycle), Mr Sausy Squirrel wishes to buy his tree from landowner Mr Willerforce Waffle. It was this passage, of course, that gave Mrs Thatcher, then in opposition, the idea of bribing council-house tenants to buy their homes. However, Mr Willerforce Waffle refuses to sell, explaining: "I'm going to cut all these trees down." Only yesterday, the *Daily Mirror* reported that Viscount Cranborne receives £41,000 per annum from a government agency not to cut down his trees. For the origins of this splendid policy, we need look no further than Mr Sausy Squirrel.

TREMENDOUS news of a breakthrough in the fight against crime comes from Haywards Heath, where police joined store detectives last Saturday for Operation Dumford, a blitz on shoplifting. Six special constables spent the entire day at various shops, and a grand total of no people at all were detained. "All in all," says Sergeant Alan Penfold, "we consider it to be a success."

THIS ONE'S FOR STANDING IN A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.



No rest for the judges under Blair & Co

Commentary

Hugo Young

LABOUR government will be good for you. It will be good not just in what it does but in what it is. Labour government will be clean and pure. Governance, not just government, will enter a new age. So say Labour politicians, and they really mean it. Since it seems very likely that the voters have already decided, unshakably, to award them a term in office, this beckoning of a new political age, when ministers have no further need of the corrective services of judges and other enemies of the claim is a significant one. It could not have been made with credibility in Thatcherism's first decade. Labour was putrescent. The Labour Party of Ken Livingstone and Michael Foot, of Derek Hatton and even Neil Kinnock, reeked of double-dealing, the currency of sur-

vival. But now Labour is different. When Jack Straw speaks of the probity with which Labour ministers and MPs will conduct their business, he can be given marks for serious intentions. Labour people, by and large, are less complicated and more honourable than Tories in their relations with the life we're talking about, which is public life. The evidence unearthed during the Nolan debates makes that very clear. For reasons that go deep into Britain's social and economic culture, which would make an excellent subject for a doctoral thesis, private business has never had much interest in employing Labour politicians in any capacity whatever, even if they've run the national economy rather well. So Labour politicians simply expose themselves to fewer of the temptations that lie down one avenue of corruption, which is the financial. They have time to be good state servants, because they have nothing else to be.

Tony Blair, moreover, is a living repudiation of corruption of every kind. He exudes an indecent decency. He also has not lost his innocence. When he speaks for the highest standards, and for cleaning out the Tory stables, and for a new charter of honesty

in government, he carries the rhetorical force of one who has not yet lived or seen enough to know how idealistic such ambitions are. His indictment of ministers whose decisions hang on the Scott report sounds as though it comes from someone who believes it inconceivable that a Labour minister will ever be caught in a similar situation. The stern pieties with which Labour speakers greet the weekly, sometimes daily, cases of ministers being overturned by the courts for one legal error or another suggest a party entirely confident that it will avoid the same mistakes, which happen, in any case, solely because Tory ministers are venal, power-mad fanatics.

Among the people who will be pleased to hear about this dawn age of a proper political correctness are the judges. Tory ministers have kept the judges exceedingly busy, thanks to conduct by them or their civil servants that has led to the growth of judicial review by ten times or more. The judges have become a power in the land, out of all recognition compared with their reclusive unimportance 20 years ago. In the tabloid press, they qualify for the attention once paid to the little Hitlers of Lambeth Court-

cil. But, contrary to the received wisdom, most judges do not want this power. They mistrust it. Brought up at a time when judges, in the English tradition, were persons unknown, they are more comfortable with a role that does not perpetually take them into the political arena.

How and why they've been dragged there is a story close to the biographical heart of the 16 Tory years. But most of the judges I know, including senior ones who've worked the most damage on the Tory Government, would prefer it otherwise. One senses that some of the cornucopia of cases successfully brought against ministers owe their decisions to the judge's belief — perhaps subconscious, perhaps even not — that the minister has been in power too long and grown unaccustomed to the checks and balances of which he must now be made aware. The sense of the bench as Her Majesty's cantankerous opposition isn't my concept so much as the judiciary's own apprehension of power. Under Labour, therefore, the judges look forward to a quieter life. Many welcomed the reactionary lecture which the Lord Chancellor presumes, Lord Irvine of Lairg, gave the other day, arguing against what he called "judicial supremacy". Judges want a Labour government because, among other things, they might then be relieved of the need to court any such temptation. Lord Irvine wants quieter judges because he is about to become a minister, and his future colleagues will not relish judicial interference.

These shared ambitions are worrying. Maybe my sample of judges is small and unrepresentative. What is not disputable is the overwhelming pressure Labour will exert-

ence to act like the Tories whom they now condemn. After maybe 18 years in opposition, free to refine their purity into substance of ever greater superiority, the cloven hoof of office will descend.

The transition is already noticeable. Labour is preparing for power by strengthening the hold of future ministers on it. Hard-headed cynicism is the necessary cement of executive life, and the leadership is beginning to exhibit it. Gordon Brown's refusal to permit any public spending promises may be acting out a valid disciplinary code. Mr Straw himself is perhaps a more revealing case. Never a wild enthusiast for the constitutional reform programme he's supposed to be in charge of, to which the party is inextricably committed, he gave a lecture this week which appeared to begin slow-timing the agenda. With regionalism already dead, moreover, how far can Labour really be counted on to relinquish the centralised secretariat of power which socialism was born to exercise, and which the party will inherit in ample plenitude from the Thatcherite years?

Under Labour, there will be dubious arms sales and fallen ministers, broken laws and vicious turf-battles. The machine will have its own momentum, governing as ruthlessly as it can. Having, like Tory ministers, the best of intentions, their Labour successors will find it impossible to comprehend why anyone should stop them. Under Labour, in other words, Mr Blair will be relieved of sanctity, and power will work its inexorable corruptions. So for the judges, too, the laws of nature will not change. They won't be free to go to sleep.

You just can't avoid those sexual politics



Natasha Walter

CONSERVATIVE women don't really like feminism, right? Conservative women would like to see wives back in the home, right? Wrong. Previously unpublished statistics from a Mori poll in June show that support for feminism is much the same among Conservative and Labour voters. Among female Conservative voters, 21 per cent thought that feminism had been good for women but not for men; among Labour women, that figure was 24 per cent. Among Conservative voters, 51 per cent thought feminism had been good for both women and men; while among Labour voters, only 47 per cent agreed.

So support for feminism and the changes it has brought is a solid reality among Conservative women, although it remains almost invisible. Despite this support among their electorate, individual women who are both Conservative and feminist feel isolated and misrepresented by a culture that denies the compatibility of the two creeds.

Are the two incompatible? Angela Rumbold has said: "I am a feminist and a real Conservative." Teresa Gorman describes the House of Commons as "a factory for boring men" and has spoken out, vividly and angrily, against her party's traditionalist rhetoric on the family. When she was last Employment Secretary, in 1993, Gillian Shephard drew attention to the "shock statistics" of women's low achievement at work: Shephard has been called a "sensible feminist". Fiona Driscoll, the current chair of the 500 Group, whose aim is to get more women into Parliament, is a strong Conservative supporter. "Feminism is associated with the loony left," she has said sadly. But she still calls herself a feminist. There is a mainstream, populist feminism that crosses political boundaries.

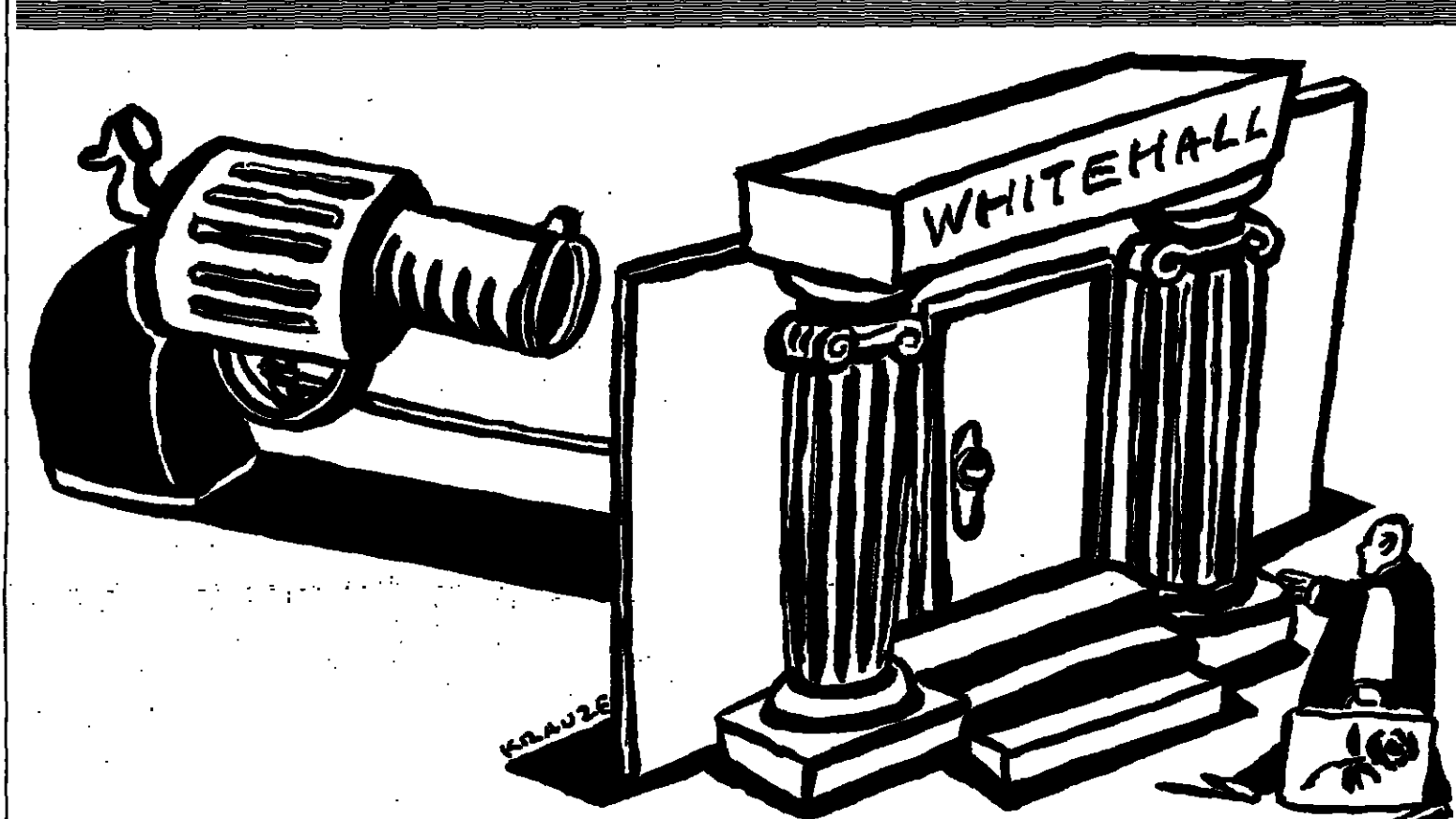
The other, altogether more common, view of Conservative women is constantly reinforced by documentaries like last night's BBC2 *Modern Times* programme, *Tory Wives*, in which ranks of beautiful middle-aged women, with their blonde highlights and rictus smiles on display, talked about the art of staying in the background. But one or two were clear-sighted about the failings of that culture: "Their loyalty to a system that makes them so endlessly forthcoming is rather puzzling."

At the same time the masculine culture of the party at Westminster becomes ever more exaggerated. There are no female whips in the Conservative Party, although the whips' office is seen as a fast stream for rising MPs. Blair's front bench now fields 19 women, whereas Major's has only 10.

This unyielding masculinity may contribute to many years of the wilderness for the Tories after the next election. Judging from selections that have already been made, and assuming a six per cent swing to Labour, Labour could then have more than 100 women MPs and the Conservative Party just a dozen. The party has misjudged if it thinks this is a minor problem. The imbalance will encourage voters even more to see Conservatives as part of an outdated, class-ridden establishment with no interest in questioning the ways in which members get and keep power.

IS THERE any absolute reason why Conservatives cannot speak the language of feminism? In Britain, feminism and socialism are often seen as inseparable. But I think we should be clear that feminism and socialism are two separate choices. Many Conservative voters clearly believe that already. If we strip feminism down to its core values, its belief in equality of opportunity and personal freedom for women, it is possible to combine that with Conservatism. It is only when we make further choices about how that equality is best achieved that we find we must take a party-political path.

Socialists may then argue for the minimum wage, increased state support for single mothers, quotas for female candidates. But a Conservative feminist might honestly believe that women's employment prospects may be blighted by the first measure, or that single mothers should not just replace dependence on men with dependence on the state, or that quotas will only lay a veneer of equality on a culture that should be changed by conviction. After a Conservative defeat, we will hear more and more from those who are trying to make those bridges and compromises in an effort to win back the female support they are so endlessly forthcoming away now.



Send in the think-tanks

Peter Hennessy argues that Labour must start planning now for government, to avoid the sort of bombshell that rocked Harold Wilson in 1964

THE HISTORIAN'S craft should root him or her to the past. The future is another country. And the future of the country (something Jim Callaghan did not mention) was a section on what some in the new Wilson Cabinet of 1964 called "the Great Unmentionable" — devaluation. "Of all the expedients for dealing with deficit in the balance of payments," the Treasury told him, "devaluation is the most drastic. Circumstances are conceivable in which we might have little or no option, but it should be an important object of policy to avoid allowing such a situation to arise."

The following morning Callaghan met Wilson and George Brown in the Cabinet Room. They ruled out devaluation before the civil servants came in to take a note at the first Cabinet committee meeting of that Government on economic affairs so that the dreaded D-word did not appear in the minutes (it doesn't). Some have claimed that by 11am on the morning of Saturday, October 17, 1964, the fate of the first Wilson government was already sealed thanks to the impossibility of keeping the pound at \$2.60.

Mr Blair's little group on that shining Saturday morning in 1997 will be thinking about a floating rather than a fixed exchange rate, but other kinds of grimness will be lurking in the briefs Whitehall will have prepared for the changeover. From next January, Mr Blair and his shadows will be able to consult the permanent secretaries about the machinery of government indicating any changes they might wish to make in the direction of policy. But such chats are only a minor part of the preparation the Leader of the Opposition

and his colleagues will need to undertake if the cold douches of reality is to numb their post-election euphoria.

If I were Tony Blair I would make reducing the scope and sweep of that shock a top and constant priority between now and election day — that and the creation of the kind of human and procedural capabilities Labour will need if it is not to live through a late 1990s version of those mid-to-late 1960s disappointments and setbacks. The British political system, quite apart from the Labour Party itself, cannot risk the centre-left alternative being tainted once more (and perhaps permanently) by the stain of drift and incompetence.

So how should such a strategy of initial shock avoidance and sustained competence

lytical and practical R&D ahead of election day will repay every pound spent many times over when the boned-up slog of government begins to drain pre-election aspirations of their vitality.

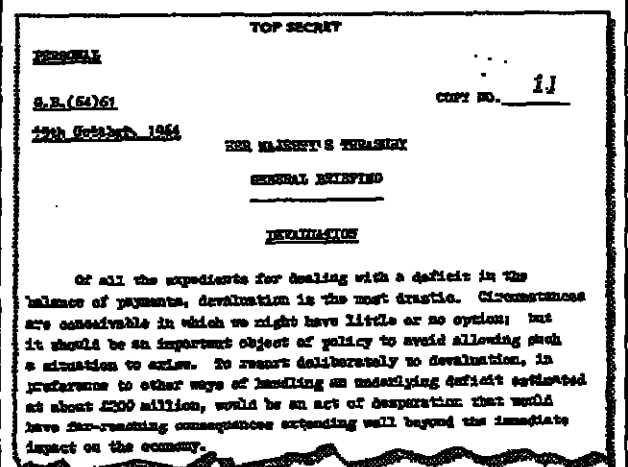
A reality audit is not synonymous with doomwatching. The possibilities for beneficial change exist even within existing economic restraints. Some of the more austere Whitehall technicians, for example, admit that there is genuine scope for creative rejigging within the current £260 billion of public expenditure. Though whenever that figure is cited it is of another one — the £303 billion that crosses the foreign exchanges in London alone in a single day — a picture of financial volatility that would make even veter-

lition is an avowed "inner cabinet" consisting of the PM, the obvious indispensable heavyweights, plus those ministers who chair the standing Cabinet committees and the PM delegates to others. I would call it the Cabinet's Strategic Policy Committee and it would look something like this: Prime Minister; Foreign Secretary; Chancellor of the Exchequer; Home Secretary; Defence Secretary; plus up to three (preferably two) other senior ministers.

If its papers and minutes were made available to the full Cabinet of 20-plus ministers and regular reports were made to the weekly Cabinet meeting, effectiveness and coherence could be reconciled with consultation and collective responsibility. Allied to these purposes, each Cabinet minister should be allowed a French-style *cabinet* in the form of an enhanced Private Office of up to eight; half career Civil Service, half-irregular with a leavening of real outside experts as opposed to political advisers type. If new Labour ministers should feel uneasy with the Civil Service they inherit (some shadows are convinced there has been politicisation, though I am not), such a *cabinet* could help save those fears.

Finally Mr Blair should confront the occupational disease that has afflicted every set of Cabinet ministers that has occupied the Cabinet Room since 1939 — overload. If Mr Blair came in with both determination, a true sense of the strategic and the measures to make and keep thinking space in the mêlée of governance, he will increase the chances of those ghastly pressures of history and inheritance being tackled and made that bit more manageable.

Peter Hennessy, Professor of Contemporary History at Queen Mary & Westfield College, London, has recently published *The Hidden Wiring* (Gollancz, £17.99). This is an extract from Tony Blair And Preparing For Power, to be delivered tomorrow to the Maidstone & Weald Constituency Labour Party.



The estimated deficit for 1964 was to grow to £800 million

thereafter be organised? Quite apart from any management or "how to be a minister" sessions Labour shadows might be put through, there needs to be a tough, comprehensive and regularly updated audit of reality prepared for Mr Blair and his colleagues by what one might call a think-tank-in-waiting. Any well-intentioned and well-learned Labour sympathisers would be well advised to sign their cheques hypothecated to such a specific purpose. Such intellectual, ana-

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10 OBITUARIES

Neil Blaney

Arms and the man from Donegal

NEIL BLANEY, "Father of the Donegal", who died aged 73, remained as uncompromising an Irish republican as on the day he first entered politics in 1948. Sinn Féin has lost an important friend in the parliament it has only in the last decade formally recognised. He inherited his father's Donegal seat and was returned as a Fianna Fáil deputy until his 1971 expulsion from the party.

Last year, Blaney said he had only entered politics following a death-bed promise to his father, a veteran of the Irish independence struggle, and the north and partition remained the themes of the son's political career. His constituency machine, "the Donegal mafia", was envied throughout the republic.

In 1967, Blaney became posts and telegraphs minister in Eamon de Valera's last government, moving on to local government and then agriculture and fisheries. But it was for his controversial involvement in the Troubles from 1969 for which he will be best remembered. In December of that year he told a Donegal dinner: "If a situation were to arise in the Six Counties in which I do not stand idly by... The Fianna Fáil party has never taken a decision to rule out the use of force if the circumstances of

the Six Counties so demand." Five months later, Blaney, Charles Haughey and three others were sensationally dismissed from the cabinet by the then Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, and charged with conspiracy to import arms. In his resignation speech, during a stormy debate, he insisted: "I have run no guns, I have provided money to pay for no guns." He received a hero's welcome back home. Many nationalists travelled from the north to greet him and he told the crowd he was pledged to achieve Fianna Fáil's "primary aim of the reunification of this land of ours".

He declared: "I am Fianna Fáil. I've always been Fianna Fáil. I hope to continue being Fianna Fáil." It was not to be. The charges against him were dropped and his co-accused were acquitted, but Lynch expelled him from the party, partly due to the two men's deep enmity. Mr Blaney had refused to support the Taoiseach's vote of confidence. After the case against Charles Haughey failed, Lynch made no secret of the fact that he believed they were guilty, telling reporters: "No one can deny there was this attempt to import arms illegally. Blaney was involved too."

The former minister responded by telling the Spectator magazine: "I feel a greater kinship with a Protestant from Antrim than I do with a Catholic from Cork... I don't necessarily mean Jack Lynch." He held on to his seat for "Independent Fianna Fáil

Republican Party", but the crisis ended his ascent of the ministerial ladder. He vocally supported the republican struggle in Northern Ireland. "Give shelter to those who come to you, give them aid and money and anything else that might be useful to them," he urged a 1971 demonstration in Letterkenny. "Let the people who are carrying on the struggle in the Six Counties know you are with them."

Blaney: 'I speak as a Donegal man, an Ulsterman, a child of the civil war, the son of an IRA man'

During the Falklands War, he berated the British when they sought European backing. "You are the people who talk so glibly about your concern for human rights. The basic human right is denied in Ireland over the generations, over the centuries — that of self-determination. We are occupied, we are partitioned and you are the people who are doing it, and perpetrating it. Take your medicine when you are getting it."

He opposed the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement, claiming that London and Dublin were only interested in restricting IRA violence, "at the same time ignoring the institutional violence of our occupiers in

the north. This agreement will create more violence, not less." He was right — the death toll climbed as loyalist paramilitaries became more active.

Blaney was a member of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Forum and of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, the assembly set up by Albert Reynolds to bring Sinn Féin in from the political cold following the IRA ceasefire of September 1994. In his Forum speeches last year he was out of step with the majority of speakers in his resolutely all-Ireland approach. He spoke against the IRA having to disarm unilaterally. "Do we want to find ourselves back in 1969 again when there was nobody had arms of any kind to protect the nationalists who were under siege?"

He wasn't ashamed of the fact that he sounded old-fashioned in an age when the term "agreed Ireland" has become popular. "I speak as a Donegal man and an Ulsterman, a child of partition, a child of the civil war, the son of an IRA man and a Cumann na mBán mother, and a person who was reared on Fianna Fáil until I parted with them or they parted with me. I do not believe there can ever will be real peace in this country until we are on the road to an undivided country and people."

David Sharrock

Neil Blaney, politician, born October 29, 1922; died November 8, 1995



Neil Blaney leaves court on bail after being charged with conspiracy to import arms

Terry Hawkins

A loving friend of theatre

TERRY HAWKINS, who has died aged 55, came down from York University in 1972 to his family's greengrocery and fish shop in Shipston-on-Stour, knowing he wanted to go into the theatre. He was no good as an actor, so it would have to be administration. He would be willing to start by selling ice-creams. He wrote to many theatres. Two replied. One was the Manchester Library Theatre, which was producing, by a process of cellular division, a clone. He was taken on as front-of-house manager at the Forum, Wythenshawe. Eighteen months later, the Library Theatre's general manager moved on. With continuity so important, it seemed wise to promote the man on the spot. At 24, Hawkins became general manager, responsible for both theatres; he was Britain's youngest theatre manager.

He had a gift for friendship and made friends in Wythenshawe whom he kept for the rest of his life: they formed a network across the theatres of the north. The process continued when, in 1978, he went to the Duke's Playhouse, Lancaster, first with Howard Lloyd-Lewis as artistic director, then David Thacker. From 1982-89 he was administrator of the Oxford Stage Company, then joined Thacker again at the Young Vic just in time to launch the campaign to save it. In 1992 he was recruited by the Arts Council as a drama officer.

Terry had been involved with theatres and theatre people for almost 20 years. He enjoyed his Arts Council job, but never believed that administration was good in itself — or, in spite of the business vocabulary he was now required to use, that running a theatre had much to do with business. He endured the indoctrination, and was sent on a leadership course in which he was required to fit pieces of Lego together into appropriate managerial shapes, but he kept his integrity. Whenever he found theatres and theatre people being sold down the river for administrative convenience, he was not above delivering to his own organisation a swift and supercilious kick in the groin.

I have an image of him which I shall always cherish. It is a Saturday morning in the shopping precinct in Wythenshawe and Terry is moving urgently among the bemused shoppers — all strangers to him — handing out complimentary tickets for Waiting For Godot because he cannot bear the actors having to play to empty seats. That image encapsulates him. He loved actors, stage management, directors, writers, audiences, plays, the smell of stale sweat backstage, the tension and the release of tension. He loved the theatre, and by his death the theatre has lost a lover.

John Bowen

Terry Hawkins, theatre administrator, born February 9, 1950; died October 8, 1995

Memorial Services

LORD HOME OF THE HERBET, KT PC. There will be two Memorial Services. The first will be held at the Life of Lord Home of the Herbet will be held at 2.30pm on Saturday, 22nd January. Those wishing to attend are asked to arrive in the hall at 2.15pm. A stamped addressed envelope, to Miss R. L. Home, 22nd January, 1996, will be posted on 22nd January.

THE SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING for the Life of Lord Home of the Herbet will be held at 2.30pm on Saturday, 22nd January in the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford. The service will be held in the University Church after the service but due to the restricted space, admission will be by ticket only. Please apply to the Conference Secretary, Herford College.

IT To place your announcement telephone 0171 611 9080

Letter

Robert Keys writes: I was surprised to find no mention being made of the opera by Brian Esdaile (obituary, October 31). The Sleeping Children, which was produced by the English Opera Group around 1950. The libretto was by Tyrone Guthrie, and I acted as répétiteur on its preparation and rehearsal. As I recall, it had a reasonably good reception for a contemporary opera, and a first by its composer. Somehow it has faded into the shadows, as did Brian for some time. I fancy it may never be published, which never explain why it is not mentioned in opera dictionaries. I returned the manuscript score from which I worked and so have no musical record of it, though I have often wished that I could read it again and perhaps use some of the material in concerts. It should be mentioned in any list of works by the composer and I am sorry it was missed out in the obituary.

Another Day

November 9, 1915: When I drive across this country, with autumn falling and rustling to pieces, I am so sad, for my country, for this great wave of civilisation, 2000 years, which is now collapsing, that it is hard to live. So much beauty and peace and order and order and away and no new things coming: this house (Garsington) — it is England — my God, it breaks my soul — their England, these shafted windows, the elm trees, the distance — the past, the great past, crumbling down, breaking down, not under the force of the coming birds, but under the weight of many exhausted lovely yellow leaves, that drift over the lawn, and over the pond, like the soldiers, passing away, into inter and the darkness of winter — no, I can't bear it. For the winter stretches ahead, where all vision is lost and all memory dies out. Letters of D.H. Lawrence. Heinemann, 1932.

Oliver Harrington

Black humour at home and in exile

OLIVER Harrington, the African-American cartoonist and writer who spent nearly half his life in East Germany, has died aged 83 in Berlin. He was born in New York, the child of an African American father from North Carolina and a Jewish mother from Poland. At his South Bronx school, he was one of only two black boys in his class, and began to draw caricatures as a means of dealing with racism. After leaving school in 1929, he moved to Harlem, took a room at the YMCA and studied at the National Academy of Design. He emerged as an artist drawing the Harlem Renaissance, becoming friends with writers such as Anna Bontemps, Wallace Thurman, Rudolph Fisher, and in particular, Langston Hughes.

He began to get commissions for cartoons from the Baltimore Afro-American and the New York Amsterdam News, for which newspaper, in 1935, he created Boatsie. This petulant, disreputable character soon became a fixture in the black press, functioning as a social and racial critic, very much like Langston Hughes's down-to-earth, non-sensational character Jesse B Semple. "Ollie" Harrington continued with the adventures of Boatsie for 30 years, publishing an anthology, Boatsie and Others, in 1965. He then studied at the Yale University School of Fine Arts, while making a living as a prolific contributor of cartoons to African American newspapers, mostly the Baltimore Afro-American and the Pittsburgh Courier — which ran his series, Boop, about the mishaps of a small black child. Yet his best-known comic strip was about Boatsie, the stout, bald and mustachioed black man, it became so famous that when Orson

Welles suggested that a young black actor call himself Boatsie Washington, it spelled his immediate success as a comic dramatist. Harrington's first full-time job was as director of Reverend Adam Clayton Powell's People's Voice, which featured his cartoons. In the newspaper's first issue, in 1942, Harrington appears both as the author of a Boatsie cartoon and the powerful illustrator of a serialised reprint of Richard Wright's acclaimed novel, Native Son. During the second world



A Harrington original: 'Doctor Jenkins, before you read us your paper on inter-stellar gravitational tensions in thermo-nuclear propulsion, would you sing us a spiritual?'

war, Harrington was sent by the Courier as a war correspondent with the all-black 352nd Central Postal Directory in Italy. There he could take a measure of the level of discrimination practised in the armed forces and of the complexities of racism on the international scene.

He returned to the US, but, like Richard Wright after his initial 1948 sojourn in Paris, he found it harder to bear the daily discrimination. He crusaded against America's institutionalised racism as director of public relations for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in the south until the end of 1947, publicly supporting left-wing leaders like Benjamin Davis and WEB Du Bois. In the meantime, his illustrations for Ellen Terry's children's book, The Runaway Elephant, won him an award. As red-baiting increased, he exiled himself in France before the McCarthy witchhunts began. In Paris, he took art courses at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière while deriving his income mostly from sports and editorial cartoons for the Courier and the Defender. He became one of the cultural stars among the group of black expatriates who met at the Café Tournon. Novelist Chester Himes remembered him as the best raconteur there and a ladies' favourite. More importantly, he became Richard Wright's closest friend.

Wright died suddenly in November 1960, and, shortly after, Harrington travelled to East Berlin, accepting an offer to illustrate a series of American literary classics. Trapped behind the Berlin Wall, he chose to live and work in East Germany, seldom leaving the country. He married Helma Richter, an economist, who bore him a son. In February 1992, however, he was wrongly greeted at a Paris conference on "African Americans and Europe", when a plaque commemorating Richard Wright was unveiled.

Harrington contributed nine essays to the collection Why I Left America and Other Essays (University Press of Mississippi, 1994). Two of them dealt with the meaning and consequences of Richard Wright's expatriation and death. The Last Days Of Richard Wright, a long obituary written for Ebony in

1961, and The Mysterious Death Of Richard Wright (Daily World, 1977), which raised unanswered questions and reinforced the rumour that Wright might have been poisoned by the CIA because of his Marxist views and "un-American" activities. Of great interest to the cultural historian is the central essay of the book, Look Home, Baby. This discerning and inspired piece on home and expatriation is complemented by Why I Left America, which provides details on his career and European years. The range and excellence of Oliver Harrington's satirical and artistic talent appear in over a hundred of his works in the impressive Walter O Evans collection of African-American art, and reproduced in Dark Laughter, The Seditious Art Of Ollie W Harrington (1994).

His humorous and editorial cartoons deal with antagonistic social situations — the opposition between black and white, rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed. If Harrington's humour of the forties and fifties is akin to the "sig-

nifying" of Hughes's Simple stories, his more recent satire reflected all the political bitterness usually associated with the great left-wing illustrators during the Great Depression.

His outrage at racism in the US and all over the world stemmed from a deep sense of moral outrage. A temperamental political artist, constantly involved in the black liberation struggle, he is an important figure in 20th-century American expressive culture. Harrington latterly received some attention due to his achievements as a major comic artist who slowly but surely takes his place among recognised "classics". One would welcome a full-length biography of a man who was not only famous by association but who will remain in history as a consummate artist and a perceptive witness to our changing world.

Michel Fabre

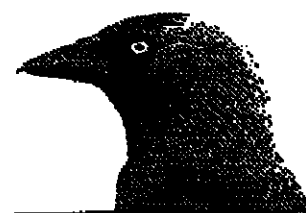
Oliver Wendell Harrington, cartoonist, born February 14, 1912; died November 2, 1995

Birthdays

Spiro Agnew, former US vice-president, 70; Kenneth Ashton, former NUJ leader, 70; David Barrie, director, National Art Collections Fund, 42; Lord Brabourne, television and film producer, 71; David Constant, cricket umpire, 54; Bryan Davies, Labour MP, 56; Karen Dotrice, actress, 40; George Duncan, chairman, Higgs and Hill, 62; Lou Ferrigno, actor, 43; Ronald Harwood, novelist, playwright, 61; Katharine Hepburn, actress, 86; Henry Hoger, High Commissioner to Namibia, 47; Alistair

Horne, military historian, 70; Prof Iwan Hughes, paediatrician, 51; Hedy Lamarr, actress, 82; Hugh Leonard, playwright, 68; Roger McGough, poet, 58; Dame Kathleen Raven, former chief nursing officer, DHSS, 85; Stella Richman, television producer, 73; Tony Slattery, writer and actor, 36; Donald Treford, former editor of the Observer, 58; Dessa Trevisan, journalist, 71; Marina Warner, writer and critic, 48; Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, chairman, Next, 59.

Jackdaw



Goodbye again

IT WAS September 20... I know that because my MOT ran out on the 21st. We've been together a long time, this car and I, and you get a funny feeling about MOTs at our stage of life: not premonitions, exactly — forebodings perhaps. We've visited a few rivers together in our 130,000 miles and not a few of them have been in the hills of the Welsh border and west. So in the last few days of the trout season, we took the road west one more time... A footbridge at the end of the meadow carried the track across the Clywedog. It is as tasty a piece of mountain

river as you could wish. The water was rushing down over a bed of hard grey slate in vertical ridges across the stream. This makes for interesting wading. We got to the bridge and looked for any movement of fish in the series of pools upstream. In vain. Flies were there — small, pale upwinged jobs, popping off the surface to fly laboriously into the trees that fringe the banks. But not a sign of fish. I tried a dry-fly, hoping to drag something up to the surface. Nothing. There have to be trout in water like this: cool, fast and lots of it, with deep pools and runs beneath overhanging trees. It is an upland trout's paradise... on the second or third trout down a deepish run the dry-fly dipped, the rod lifted and a heavy fish surged off up stream, attached to the nymph. That first fish from tumbling Clywedog was a corker. A short, deep fish with the elegant head of a mature trout. Perhaps the heaviest trout of the season and one ounce short of a pound. And that was it. A fine fish on the third or fourth cast

and then not a sniff for the next three hours.

We trudged back to the car, baffled and defeated, and brewed coffee. It was such a familiar scene. The Kelly kettle belching steam and smoke in the afternoon sunlight, the old maroon wagon back open and awash with tackle and sandwich wrappings... The days dwindle down to a precious few: Jon Beer's autumn in Trout & Salmon

Black issues

● CAPPUCCINO Cream, Soft Honey, Spicy Amber, Tawny, Mocha Caramel, Toasted Almond, Warm Copper, Bronze Glow, Soft Sable, Rich Mahogany — Cover Girl make-up shades. ● Police officer continuous fines — the Sacramento Police Department is seeking ambitious men and women who desire to build a worthwhile career in law-enforcement... minimum qualifications (include) no felony drug use as an adult United States citizen... must reside within 35 air miles within one year of appointment.

● Black books galore! Please be our guest at any one of these three enriching events.

● Before Washington, DC, a subway it had an underground railroad... the Washington DC African-American historical attractions guide... a pilgrimage to the burial vaults that sheltered escaped slaves on the road to freedom. ● It's about feelings and letting them fly. It's full of the reasons we love and reach and cry. It's a voice, a vision that brings us laughing and remembering and loving together. Mahogany greeting cards. It's what needs to be said — Mahogany, a celebration of African-American culture...

● Kraft Foods salutes the tortically black colleges — "I came here to find tradition but I brought some with me just in case" (cartoons of Jello, Miracle Whip, Maxwell House coffee). ● Central Intelligence Agency — the ultimate overseas career. To qualify you must have a strong international background, the ability to write clearly and accurately and a burning interest in international affairs... CIA encourages applications from men and women of every racial and ethnic background — we represent America and we want to be representative of America. The magazine for African-Americans, Ebony, is 50 and celebrates with pieces by Presidents, ex-Presidents and Bill Cosby; but this selection of its ads says even more

Reader, I didn't

A PLAN began to form in Tania's mind. If Chris saw how beautiful she looked in a wedding dress, he couldn't fail to fall in love with her... Next day, she spent all morning trying on wedding dresses at a local shop. Eventually, she chose one... it cost her nearly £200, but it was worth it to win him back... The next step was to arrange the car and hire a photographer. She found numbers in Yellow Pages and booked them... The day before Chris's wedding (to Elaine) Tania made sure everything was ready. She double-checked she'd got the



Ebony... mixed emotions

right church, and laid out the dress... The next morning, there was so much to do.

Tania put on her make-up with extra care. As she stepped into her gorgeous dress, she was so excited. "This will be the happiest day of my life," she told herself, twirling in front of the mirror... Tania felt wonderful, driving to the church. She felt like she was going to a ball... Tania hid behind a shed in the graveyard until everyone

Lucifer rising

IN DEMANDING a cultural conversation about evil, Andrew Delbanco, author of The Death of Satan, wants to broaden the revival of moral concern in contemporary political discourse... Delbanco is an odd and reluctant advocate for the Devil. He is an academic, is Jewish and identifies with "secular liberalism". "The idea of evil," he insists, is something "on

which the health of society depends. We have an obligation to name evil and oppose it in ourselves as well as in others." This view, he readily acknowledges, runs counter to the moral relativism of secular intellectuals, who hold that evil exists in the eye of the beholder. It also runs afoul of the postmodernist tendency in higher education to explain all the formulations of good and evil as authoritarian and repressive categories imposed by a society's ruling caste... "My dear brothers," warned the French poet Charles Baudelaire more than a century ago, "never forget when you hear the progress of the Enlightenment praised, that the Devil's cleverest ploy is to persuade you that he doesn't exist."

Come back, Satan, we need you, from a *Newsweek* essay.

E-mail Jackdaw at jackdaw@guardian.co.uk; Fax 0171-713 4566; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Edited by Vanessa Harlow

Financial Editor: Alex Brummer
Telephone: 0171-239-9610
Fax: 0171-833-4456

FinanceGuardian

Swalec again comes under attack from fellow utility company • Takeover Panel forces statement

Welsh Water in power bid

Simon Beavis
and Nicholas Barnister

WELSH Water yesterday joined the electricity bid frenzy when it was forced to admit it was back on the tail of South Wales Electricity and could make an offer of around £900 million. The privatised water company first trumpeted the benefits of cross-utility mergers four years ago — only to be foiled by government restrictions.

Welsh Water was yesterday forced by the Takeover Panel to make a Stock Exchange

statement declaring its intentions after an unusually sharp rise in Swalec's share price yesterday and a corresponding dramatic dip in the water company's shares.

WW said it was examining the case for making an offer for Swalec, and that any offer would be in the region of £10.20. Analysts insisted it could be forced to pay considerably more — and face fierce competition from abroad, mainly from the US.

WW began building a stake in Swalec the day after the power company was privatised in 1990, and repeatedly pushed for a merger with its neighbour.

After rebutting Welsh Water

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After rebutting Welsh Water

ing in self congratulation having taken control of Manweb, another power group that Welsh Water had run the slide rule over.

The City reacted to WW's announcement with something of a guffaw, pushing Swalec's shares up 70p to £10.54. The company might get hold of Swalec but definitely not at this price, was the view.

It might even have to spend £1.40 a share more just to match the sort of prices being paid for RECs and more still since the companies are fast gaining a sort of scarcity value, analysts said.

Analysts were also scenting a bid battle with a number of US utilities identified as po-

tential combatants — lead by Houston Industries, one of the thwarted bidders for Norweb.

The logic that WW spelt all those years ago is now being rehearsed almost daily. It is that there are cost savings to be made — particularly in headquarters and in key services like billing and meter reading — by bringing two utilities together.

Donna Lury, water analyst at Nikko Europe, said that four years ago Welsh Water did analyse where cost savings at Swalec could be made. "I have no doubt they could strip out costs pretty quickly. But the fundamental is whether acquisition is the best way to achieve savings."

Scottish Power — which reported a 3.9 per cent rise in first half pre-tax profits to £128 million — revealed that Manweb axed nearly 800 staff in August and September to try to pay for its unsuccessful bid defence. The Scottish group is likely to outline further cuts and savings in January.

Much will depend on the City's view of the WW management team responsible for the original Swalec investment and other unsuccessful diversifications, such as hotels, was replaced last year.

Yesterday's 30p collapse in WW's share price to 727p was hardly a vote of confidence, one broker said.

Notebook

Bank gives up in fight with Clarke



Edited by
Alex Brummer

IT IS the job of central banks to take away the punchbowl just as the party gets going. The Bank of England has proved reasonably good at this — at the first whiff of inflation, the call for base rate rises goes out. And the sooner the better, as Eddie George put it earlier this year: "A stitch in time saves nine."

But the Bank's reactions in the opposite direction are sluggish, to put it kindly. Now, the punchbowl needs to be brought back — and pronto — if the few remaining party guests are not to drift off.

The Inflation Report seemed to recognise this. Of nine recent pieces of economic news cited, eight appear to support the case of the Confederation of British Industry and Institute of Directors for a rate cut.

Even the money supply — up until now the only indicator signalling inflation ahead — is growing more slowly. Labour demand has stalled, export growth has peaked, the pound has risen, the GDP has slowed, the rate of average earnings has dipped and input prices eased.

Retail prices have edged up, but even the Bank admits that wages on seasonal food are largely to blame. And no one needs reminding that the construction industry is officially in recession, business confidence is following consumer sentiment into the doldrums, and investment is stuck inside behind expectations.

Why then is the Bank refusing even to countenance monetary easing? It is supposed to be geared to hitting the Government's target of keeping inflation below 2.5 per cent. However, to be consistent, the Bank should actually have stuck to its stand for deaver borrowing, given that the report expects inflation to be "just above" 2.5 per cent in two years' time.

But Governor Eddie George knows a "no" when he hears it — and he has, many times, from Kenneth Clarke. Instead, the Bank is sitting firmly on the fence. The report is prudent enough for Mr George to say "I told you so" should prices take off, but not so delatatory to attract more unwelcome criticism from industry. Thus the Bank has implicitly handed over responsibility to Mr Clarke.

Welsh champions

AND then there were four. At this late stage in the bidding war for the regional electricity companies, it is almost certainly too late to hope for any official scrutiny of the economic benefits/costs of reorganising one of our basic industries simply on the basis of price. The attitude appears to be: never mind about the fitness of the new proprietors, don't worry about the competition issues arising from vertical integration between power

companies and distributors, and forget the complexities of regulation when a water and electricity utility are merged.

If the Government, through Trade Secretary Ian Lang, were to become involved now, it would mean opening a Pandora's box of issues ranging from the underpricing of the electricity companies at privatisation, to the giveaway of the National Grid at birth.

No doubt an effective case can be made in favour of some of these mergers. The likely £1 billion bid by Welsh Water for South Wales Electricity is case in point.

Those who have watched Welsh Water squander funds on its problematical non-regulated businesses, like the engineering concern Acer, will no doubt welcome the solid earnings flow from Swalec. It could also be argued that the merger is an important step in giving the principality a strong regional economic base of its own. This would be a rare chance for Wales to have its own national champion.

However, there are a number of other questions which need to be asked about this transaction. Welsh Water may have handled the summer drought better than some of the other water supply companies. Nevertheless, it was never intended that its endowment from the Government should be used for a buying spree: it was intended for investment in improving supplies and bringing up sludge clearance to EU-wide standards.

There is, frustratingly, little passion about any of this any longer. The 4.7 per cent rise in Swalec's share price was eventually forced, an announcement of regulatory sloppiness. Throughout the utilities saga, the stock market has been the scene of unseemly speculation, presumably based on a degree of inside information. But as yet the public has had no reassurance that orderly markets rule.

Sparkling price

THE diamond-price increase announced by the De Beers sales monopoly can be read both as a sign of confidence and as an admission that the world gemstone market is split between the depressed masses and a new overclass aggressively consuming top-quality sparklers. First, the confidence: any price rise, at a time when super-delicate negotiations are under way to persuade Russia to renew its membership of the De Beers cartel, suggests that talks are proceeding rather more promisingly than many commentators would have us believe.

Were the chips in Eaton Garden genuinely to believe that the world's second-largest producer would, some time next year, be out of the cartel and dumping millions of dollars-worth of stones on the market, they would hardly have posted a 5 per cent price increase. But the fact that, unlike previous rises, this one applies only to diamonds of 2 carats and above indicates that recovery in demand is concentrated among the worldwide super-rich; a 2-carat stone is rare, and the vast majority of diamonds are smaller than this.

Vosper to axe 500 jobs if it fails to win MoD contract

Chris Barrie

THE Southampton-based warship builder Vosper Thornycroft warned yesterday that 500 jobs will be axed next year unless it wins a contract from the Ministry of Defence to build three Type 23 frigates.

Announcing an 11 per cent hike in pre-tax profits for the half-year to £11.4 million on turnover of £114 million, chairman Lord Wakeham, the former Cabinet minister, said the MoD was expected to award the contract before the end of the year.

Vosper would have to axe 150 temporary employees and 350 full-time staff from its 3,000-strong workforce if it loses the work to its rival, GEC's Yarrow yard on the Clyde.

Some 100 contractors have already been laid off in the last two months as the company completes steel work on export contracts.

Although Vosper specialises in building smaller vessels, managing director Martin Jay said the yard's capability in large ship construction had been demonstrated by its success on stretched Type 42s. Price was now the issue in the Type 23 bid.



All at sea... Vosper Thornycroft shipyard is hoping to wrest order from rival GEC to build three Type 23 frigates

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX MACNAUGHTON

Pension cash 'used to shore up ailing firm'

Paul Murphy

ALMOST £250,000 of pension money was used to shore up Bullers, a mini-conglomerate run by former Stock Exchange official David Cunningham, according to a confidence report carried out by accountants Grant Thornton.

Administrative costs and overheads at the firm, whose interests ranged from post-production work for the film industry to a fireplace supplier, appeared "to be out of control" with the group's head office lacking "control and awareness of events."

A leaked draft of the report — which was commissioned by Barclays Bank, who finally called receivers in to Bullers last month — paints a picture of a company suffering acute cashflow problems since early this year with Bullers beginning to fall into arrears with tax and VAT payment just months after last November's "rescue" refinancing.

Withdrawals from the pension fund went back 15 months.

Grant Thornton concluded that an immediate cash injection of £3.5 million would have been required to save the company.

Mr Cunningham insisted yesterday that drafts of the report circulating in the City had been superseded by later versions of Grant Thornton's investigation. He pointed out that personal loans he received from the company, cited by the accountants, had been cleared by shareholders. But he declined to comment further.

When rumours surrounding Bullers' pension fund first began to surface in September, Mr Cunningham stated that any alterations to the fund had been proper and above board.

The draft report states that Grant Thornton felt Bullers' management were "unable to resolve the company's difficulties and have not exercised proper organisational and fi-

nanial controls in the recent past."

Mulling over alternatives to receivership, such as raising new working capital, the accountants note that as Bullers "has raised and used some £4.7 million of funds in recent years and still not improved its trading and cashflow position, we do not consider this to be a realistic proposition."

In its dying days, with Bullers having many of its cheques bounced and creditors clamouring for payment, the group also faced numerous court actions, with Grant Thornton estimating legal liabilities at close to £500,000.

Money was withdrawn from the pension fund as far back as June 1994. Some £232,000 would have been required to top up the fund.

Scot Barnes, one of the two Grant Thornton partners appointed as receivers in mid-October, declined to comment. However, as with all receiverships, he will be preparing a report for the Department of Trade & Industry.

BA chief calls for Heathrow growth

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

SOME 12.5 million extra passengers a year would be able to use Heathrow's new Terminal 5 if the Government approves the project, Sir Colin Marshall, British Airways chairman, told the public inquiry investigating the plan yesterday.

Sir Colin said that approval would enable BA to increase the number of passengers from the current 23.5 million to 36-million a year. It would also be able to increase its staff by 7,000.

The inquiry, which is already three months behind schedule and may not finish until late next year, was also told by Sir Colin that Heathrow was at the centre of BA's global plans. It could not survive without a successful principal hub in the UK and Heathrow was its only realistic option.

London's role as an international business centre and Britain's position as the world's leading air transport nation would be damaged if the fifth terminal was turned down. Without it, many passengers would by-pass London or the UK, making their connections or trips into Europe via continental airports.

He was convinced that expansion at Gatwick was not an alternative. It had the disadvantages of greater distance, time and cost for most passengers from the main markets in the South-east, and was limited by a single runway. The best way ahead for Gatwick was the development of a "smaller, complementary network."

But Nic Ferriday, a spokesman for Friends of the Earth, attacked Sir Colin for refusing to offer the prospect of limits either on Heathrow expansion or related activities such as road building or service areas.

South Africa prepares for its Big Bang

THE Johannesburg Stock Exchange yesterday embarked on a radical reform programme designed to transform it into an international equity market — a South African Big Bang just two years after the ending of apartheid, writes Mark Miller.

The shake-up has opened the door to foreign and corporate membership of the exchange. Automated screen-based trading is due to begin in March and a rolling settlement programme will be phased in over the next two years.

The Johannesburg exchange is ranked as the largest emerging country stock market and the tenth in the world by value, though on turnover terms it ranks a lowly 27th.

That is a legacy of South Africa's years in isolation and its regime of exchange controls, which have locked the institutional cash flow into the domestic market, with investors tending to buy any shares on offer and then hanging on to them, restricting the market's liquidity.

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12 FINANCE AND ECONOMICS

Inquiry asks if boom-bust frightens off firms or 'hurdle rates' are too high

CBI to learn from Germans

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

THE Confederation of British Industry is to conduct a fresh inquiry into short-termism amid growing concern that the UK's poor investment record is linked to the structure of the financial system.

As one of his first acts since joining the employers' organisation, Adair Turner, the CBI's director-general, has ordered an investigation into the striking differences between the investment deci-

sions of British and German firms. The study, which is expected to be completed by the spring, will question the Government's view that the sole barrier to higher investment has been the volatility of the UK economy in recent decades, with firms frightened off by the virulence of the boom-bust cycle.

"That view may be true, but it merits further thinking," Mr Turner told the Guardian. "Macroeconomic stability is a necessary condition for investment. The question is whether it is sufficient."

The last time the CBI looked into short-termism, at

the start of the current decade, it concluded there was no failure of the City to back industry. However, the takeover of Rover by BMW has reopened the debate, with British managers contrasting the long-term view of projects taken by their new German owners to the short pay-back periods and high returns demanded on investment when the company was under domestic control.

Mr Turner said the CBI study, which will call on his old firm McKinsey for assistance, would look explicitly at German and British-owned firms operating in the UK.

With similar labour forces and management, he said, it should be possible to discover whether there were different attitudes to investment.

"If we find a difference we will have something strong on which to base a case," he said. "My gut feeling is that there is something in this."

Mr Turner said he was concerned about the hurdle rates (self-imposed profit targets) faced by UK firms, who often have to make investment pay for itself in four years, against the 20-year pay-back periods enjoyed by German firms.

The CBI's competitiveness

unit has raised short-termism as an issue worthy of further study, as did Stephen Dorrell when he was financial secretary to the Treasury.

"Britain has traditionally had more variable-rate debt and overdraft borrowing to small firms than has Germany," Mr Turner said.

"This might not affect hurdle rates, but it might." He said there were signs that Britain was shifting towards the continental pattern of a greater emphasis on fixed-rate debt, and it would be interesting to find out the impact of this trend on investment decisions.

Turner measures up to 'a hard act to follow'

Larry Elliott profiles the latest chief spokesman for Britain's employers

ADAIR Turner knew from the moment the headhunters tracked him down in Poland six months ago that following Howard Davies at the CBI was never going to be easy. If he harboured any doubts on that score they have been erased by his first two months at Centre Point.

"As I work my way round the country I hear the same comment in a variety of regional accents," the new director-general says, in his best gruff-Northern-businessman voice. "He's a tough act to follow."

However, Mr Turner shows no sign of being intimidated by the reputation of his predecessor, who has now decamped four steps down the London Underground's Central line to be

deputy-governor of the Bank of England. Mr Turner laughs off suggestions that he has been shunted into a smaller office than that which Mr Davies inhabited on the 10th floor of the 1960s skyscraper, adding that it is in tune with the mood of the times.

The former whizz-kid management consultant at McKinsey seems thoroughly pleased that the make-over at the CBI was by-and-large completed by Mr Davies. The internal structure and the public image of the country's main employers' organisation have been revamped in the past three years.

Mr Turner, who is aged 40, and married with two daughters, is said by former colleagues to be amaz-

ingly clever. The only slight hint that he is not quite the perfect young go-getter is that he takes sugar in his tea.

"Howard did have a high profile. But what the CBI got good at was having a consistency and intelligence of message which could not be dismissed as whingeing," Mr Turner says.

"You just can't go around asking for more motorways and for interest rates to be one point below whatever level they happen to be. You won't have much influence if you do."

One thing the CBI certainly does not lack is influence. It is well plugged into the government machine, and Labour's desire to snuggle up to the upper echelons of the business world is amply illustrated by Tony Blair's appearance at next week's annual conference in Birmingham.

Mr Turner is diplomatic

itself when the subject of Labour comes up, reflecting the inherent tension between the possibility of a change of government over the next 18 months and the fact that the CBI's membership tends to support the Conservative Party.

"We welcome the shifts that appear to have occurred in key aspects of Labour policy. They are saying things that are more pro-business than they were before," he says.

But the CBI has three separate categories of doubt about Mr Blair's policies on an inflation target and tax clarified; second, it disagrees with the Opposition about the minimum wage and the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty.

The third point is one of trust — whether Mr Blair can carry his backbenchers with him.

The Government does not

escape unscathed either. In his short time at the CBI, Mr Turner has launched a task force to look into the fallings of the Treasury's Private Finance Initiative, warned the Chancellor against playing politics with the Budget and made it pretty clear that business is becoming slightly perturbed by the slowdown in economic activity.

"We want a sustainable fall in interest rates, and for that the Budget is the key. If we have a Budget which doesn't take unnecessary risks with borrowing, that could lead to a sustainable fall in rates," he says.

A year ago, Mr Turner was in Russia negotiating to do a piece of work for McKinsey for a Russian bank, and no inkling I would be at the CBI today. I was quite surprised when I was first contacted. But it seemed quite obvious once I thought about it."



For Adair Turner, getting the call to run the CBI was a surprise PHOTOGRAPH BY HAMILTON WEST

Ministry orders heavy Daiwa loans reduction

Kevin Rafferty in Tokyo

DAIWA Bank will be ordered by the Japanese finance ministry to give up as much as 40 per cent of its international loans and securities after the \$1.1 billion (£700 million) losses run up by rogue trader Toshihide Iguchi in its New York branch.

Daiwa held \$24 billion in loans and \$5.5 billion in securities in its international operations as at the end of September, according to Japanese banking sources.

About 15 per cent of the combined sum is related to the bank's US operations, which the American federal authorities have ordered Daiwa to close because of an alleged cover-up of the

\$1.1 billion losses on US treasury bond trading.

The Osaka-based bank is facing a 24-count criminal indictment relating to the losses and the fact that it waited for almost two months after discovering them to report them to the US banking authorities. Daiwa blames Mr Iguchi for the losses, but the American indictment claims that the bank's top management was involved in the cover-up.

Daiwa will also have to relinquish another part of its international loans as punishment for a cover-up of \$97 million losses at its trust division separate from the \$1.1 billion lost by the main New York branch.

Daiwa will be asked to draw up by November 20 a specific plan for the asset reductions and the ministry will require

it to report on progress every week. It was reported that part of the loans and securities to be shrunk would be taken over by Sumitomo, which has agreed to help Daiwa shut its US operations and with which talks are going on about a merger.

Troubles mounted for Daiwa when the Wall Street Journal alleged senior executives of the bank knew about and condoned the cover-up of the smaller losses, which occurred in 1987 but were disclosed only last month.

The bank's reputation, along with that of Japanese financial regulation, has been battered by news of the huge losses. Kyodo news agency reported that Daiwa will cut its dividend for the year to March by up to 1 yen a share from last year's 3.5 yen.

Why Sheikh lost interest in rescue

Maxwell trial

Dan Atkinson

THE Sheikh of Abu Dhabi was set to join a \$400 million rescue in 1997 for the ailing private interests of the late Robert Maxwell, an Old Bailey court heard yesterday. "I was aware of the source of the funds being... Abu Dhabi, including the ruler of that country," Kevin Maxwell said.

Helping to arrange the cash injection was Israeli ambassador-at-large David Kimchi, who was involved, at the time, in the Middle East peace conference in Madrid; his name and that of the possible investors were kept from bankers because of "political sensitivities".

Elsewhere in his evidence, Kevin accused former Maxwell pension-fund manager Trevor Cook of concocting evidence. Mr Cook, said Kevin, has known all about the intra-group movements of cash since the mid-1980s but, after Robert Maxwell's death, he, knowing the regulator Imro was about to make an inspection, "tidied" things he should not have done.

His doctored evidence, said Kevin Maxwell, and created new documents. The jury was hearing Day 39 of the trial of Kevin Maxwell, who denies two charges of conspiracy to defraud pension funds, and Ian Maxwell and former financial adviser Larry Trachtenberg, who deny one such charge.

Kevin said Lebanese businessman Roger Tamraz would be leading the rescue

syndicate; Mr Tamraz's role, he said, was that of investor in his own right and agent of Abu Dhabi.

The figure of \$400 million, he said, had been calculated by him as being sufficient to keep Robert Maxwell Group — laden with debts reaching \$1.6 billion in December 1991 — in business. He said \$250 million would have gone to repay loans from pension funds, \$50 million would have been repaid to the Mirror group and the remainder would have been used as working capital. The balance of the \$200 million net debt to pension funds would be made up with property and unquoted Maxwell assets, he said.

But the rescue — in which Mr Tamraz's syndicate would have repaid \$253 million in December 1994 and been given a chance to acquire half of RMG — fell through. Bankers insisted on a substantial payment, thought by Kevin to amount to \$50 million, by noon on December 6.

Mr Tamraz has been unwilling to make this down payment, said Kevin. But, he told Alan Suckling QC, for the Crown: "I do not believe it had anything to do with the pension funds."

Mr Tamraz, he said, had been put out by two other factors: Kevin's loss of control of RMG's quoted subsidiary Maxwell Communication Corporation, which contained many of the assets, and the timetable involved.

Earlier, Kevin once again insisted to Mr Suckling that his evidence was honest: "I'm telling you in the strongest possible terms that I'm not inventing evidence."

The case continues today.

Motor industry warned of competition danger

Martyn Halsall
Northern Industrial Correspondent

THE British motor industry was warned yesterday by a leading industrialist that it is in danger of being swept aside by its superior international competitors.

In one of the toughest warnings addressed to the industry by one of its own business leaders, George Simpson, chief executive of the motor and aerospace group Lucas, told 1,000 delegates from the industry that "an abundance of international competition" was ready to step in to win business if British firms failed to meet higher standards.

Speaking at a conference

convened by the trade and industry department and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, Mr Simpson said there was a "performance gap" with the best companies overseas.

He said: "UK quality does not generally match that of Japan, that UK innovation generally lags behind that of the US, that UK design skills do not fully match that of the Italians, and that UK science and technology education structures lag behind the Germans, and that in general our productivity levels fall short of the best."

Mr Simpson warned the components industry, which has a £15 billion turnover, not to rely on a competitive currency and controlled inflation, factors which are habitually transient. Japanese

component companies would set up production in Europe, he warned.

An estimated 4,000 companies are involved in the UK automotive components industry, producing an annual turnover of around £15 billion, of which \$6 billion of products are exported. Tim Eggar, industry and energy minister, warned the conference: "If we don't see increases in the competitiveness of the automotive supply chain we will all suffer. Your companies will suffer. Your employees will suffer." Government was preparing a special white paper on competitiveness, he said.

The conference was told of a programme to bring overseas production experts, including from Japan, into the British industry.

Sparkling price for the high street gem hunters

Dan Atkinson

DAMON group De Beers yesterday confirmed what many have suspected for a long time — that in the 1990s, it's a very rich man's world.

The good news is that the price of the sort of sparklers traditionally bought for girlfriends by office clerks is to stay at roughly February 1993 levels. The bad news is that this price freeze reflects De Beers' lack of faith in the economic prospects of the vast majority of people in both Britain and most of the developed nations.

In days gone by, the compa-

ny's sales arm, which markets about 80 per cent of the world's diamonds, raised their prices by an average figure. Not any more.

But while ordinary consumers worry about their jobs, their bills, their (rising) taxes and their (shrinking) social benefits, the super rich of the 1990s just cannot get enough of big-ticket gemstones.

And so yesterday De Beers jacked up the price of stones weighing 2 carats or more by a robust 5 per cent; it left the price of those lighter than 2 carats — the majority of diamonds — untouched.

This allows the diamond industry to chase bigger profits

from the new international aristocracy — money market speculators, Russian tycoons, sheikhs, suitors, gold-plated entertainment stars and sports millionaires — without putting off high street customers.

So far, so good. But the omens are gloomy. Traditionally, diamonds and other luxury goods have been the last products to emerge from recession. This split-price decision indicates that the world's wealthy have long ago bounded out of the slump leaving everyone else behind.

For the aforementioned clerks, the price freeze is, said to say, just another symptom of the big chill.

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THE THOROUGHbred BANK

Underside

Dan Atkinson

JAMES Wolfensohn, World Bank chief and traditional follower of the Jewish faith, has found the Catholic Church really can deliver the votes. Last month, the respective committees of the US House of Representatives and the Senate met to reconcile their votes of funds for the bank's anti-poverty International Development Association; it seemed the lower figure voted by the House would be approved, but telephone calls by Mr Wolfensohn to each of the Cardinals covering the chairman's constituencies produced a remarkable result — an extra \$100 million.

COME on down (1): The Bank of England, it appears, is learning some lessons from Tesco and Sainsbury. From next year, the price of its brand

leader — the quarterly Inflation Report — will be coming down, down, down from £4 to £3, a price-busting 25 per cent cut. But, as all discerning shoppers know, bargains on one part of the store invariably mean increases elsewhere. So it is with the Bank, where those who subscribe both to the Inflation Report and the Quarterly Bulletin — which contains dreary speeches and articles no one reads/understands — will see the price of the package up, up, up by a Maastricht-condition-smashing 25 per cent, more than six times the current rate of inflation and 10 times the rate the Bank thinks safe for the economy as a whole.

COME on down (2): The super-worshipful Royal Society for the Arts is holding a seminar in January on that caring, sharing, non-existent entity Tomorrow's Company. Attendees will hear of the inclusive route to shareholder value, and learn the way forward to an inclusive tomorrow. The fee, however, is an ex-

clusive £550 plus VAT, ie £616.63.

VISITORS to the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit next week in Osaka will face the sort of bill-gadding that has helped make Japan the force she is today. Just now it's virtually impossible to find a hotel room in Osaka because most have been block-booked, but the Japan Travel Bureau will offer a room for a £3.82



"handling fee". The lucky room-finder, however, has to find one night's accommodation along with the handling fee, and should he wish to pay by bank transfer from overseas, or foreign credit card there is a "bank commission" of 21.00 per cent — a 16.31 per cent earner on one first-class room and enough to help Osaka's Daiwa Bank recoup some of its New York trading losses.

HOW alarming to see the backbench Treasury committee brush aside the Attorney-General's attempts to ensure a fair trial for Kevin and Ian Maxwell. Its report, published yesterday under full Parliamentary privilege, contains two references to the late Captain that, in another publication, would have had the author up for contempt of court.

LAUNCHING its new anti-smuggling initiative earlier this week, HM Customs & Excise detailed some inventive excuses offered by bootleg-

gers. They range from the predictable — "I bought 50 litres of vodka as a prize for a raffle", "I drink 10 litres of spirits a week" and "All 28 kilos of tobacco are for my own use, and you can't prove any different" — to the man who, when collared with about 24lbs of handrolling baccy, claimed he was going to put it in a stew (with beef, garlic, carrots and onions) in which he would wash in as a cure for "flu, colds and rheumatism. Don't ever change."

MAURICE Saatchi's plans to label his enlarged private group Megalomedes had cartoonist Nick Newman reaching for legal advice. NN's opionous strip, casting a jaundiced eye over the doings of media moguls, ran for seven years, with at least two originals sold to the old Saatchi agency after requests from his end. Now his lawyer warns him that if Maurice registers the name — he may have to terminate the cartoon altogether. That's showbusiness.

Cricket

SA produce a wrong 'un

Edward Harris in Kimberley

ENGLAND, building themselves up for an ordeal by pace bowling in South Africa this winter, will today encounter the republic's latest discovery: a purveyor of the chinaman.

Paul Adams is an 18-year-old Cape Coloured who has played one B-level match and one first-class match but whose first-class debut in the republic's latest discovery: a purveyor of the chinaman.

Adams is the left-arm equivalent of a leg-spinner. He bowls all varieties of wrist spin including the chinaman, and his stock ball is the left-arm doosy which spins away from the right-handed batsman. "He has come from nowhere to take on the Lions," says Peter Pollock, captain of selectors, put it when he announced that Adams would be playing here.

So instead of preparing themselves to dodge and duck balls flying about their ears, England's batsmen will have to unravel the mysteries of a teenager who contorts himself into an astonishing shape to propel the ball.

Last weekend Adams made his first-class debut at Centurion Park, Pretoria — venue for the first Test — and destroyed Transvaal with six for 101 in their second innings, giving him eight wickets in the match.

His captain John Commins, who also leads the A side today, said: "He was finding spin on a pitch on the first day when the other slow bowlers could not find any until the fourth. He turns it on anything and can drop the ball right on the spot. There are only two good spinners in the country and if Adams can perform at this level against England the sky is the limit."

England are unperturbed

by the opposition and by the pitches, mainly slow, that have been provided for their Test build-up. The captain Mike Atherton argues that English players can adapt to almost anything after a couple of summers playing on pitches from Chester-le-Street to The Oval.

He said: "This is the best start to a tour that I have been on. We are winning, the lads have found their feet and the group has gelled. We have a pretty good idea of what the Test series will be but we just have a couple of pieces to put into the jigsaw."

Those pieces are Robin Smith and Devon Malcolm, who have to perform here or risk missing out on the start of a five-Test series that, once it begins, is so concentrated that it leaves precious few opportunities for those out of the side.

Yesterday afternoon the players completed their round of township duties by opening another pavilion, this time for the Yorkshire cricket club — so named because the former Yorkshire wicketkeeper David Bairstow once visited here and ran a coaching clinic.

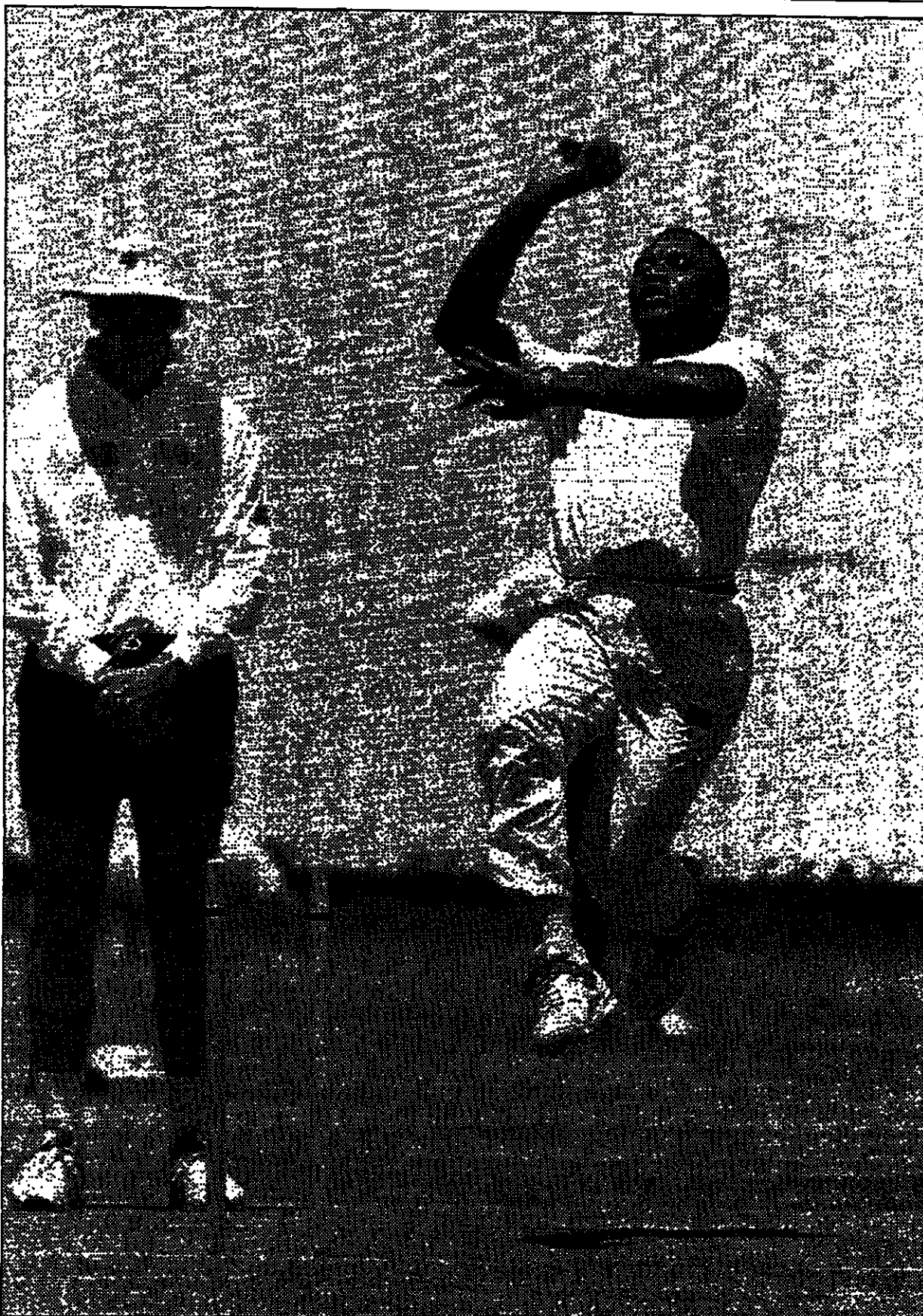
England A maintained a 100 per cent start to their tour of Pakistan with a comfortable six-wicket win over a Combined XI in Karachi.

The opener, Nick Knight, started England to their victory target of 116 with an unbeaten 71, receiving solid support from Yorkshire's Anthony McGrath in an unbroken fifth-wicket stand of 80.

Earlier the Combined XI's Mohammad Ramzan had carried his bat for 121.

The New Zealand pacemen Chris Cairns and Dion Nash captured three wickets for eight runs between them to undermine India on a rain-interrupted first day of the third and final Test in Cuttack yesterday. Cairns struck twice as India slumped from 69 without loss to 77 for three in the morning.

Rain wiped out the second session but India reached 120 for three by the close.



In the mood... Devon Malcolm warms up for today's match, watched by Angus Fraser

PHOTOGRAPH BY GRAHAM CHADWICK

Sport in brief

Samoa win marred by high-tackle row

WESTERN SAMOA were forced to defend some over-exuberant tackling after they had opened their rugby union tour of Scotland and England with a 55-22 victory against Edinburgh yesterday, writes Gordon Lyle. The World Cup quarter-finalists came under attack from the opposing captain Ally Donaldson and coach Ian Barnes when the wing Duncan Macrae was forced to retire after a high challenge by the full-back Veli Patu in the closing moments.

Barnes said: "I think Patu should have been sent off," and Donaldson added: "The ref said if he had known who it was he would have been off. It was a cop-out. I told him who it was."

Patu, who scored three tries, is fortunate not to be going before a disciplinary panel.

The Samoans' manager Bryan Williams said: "Our guys don't back off a tackle but the intent sometimes looks worse than it is."

The Samoans trailed 0-10 but although Edinburgh dominated the set phases they were undone by their inability to close down the tourists' powerful backs quickly enough.

Best win for Chaloner

MARK CHALONER, a last-minute addition to England's squash squad for the world team championships next week in Cairo, produced the most important victory of his career yesterday in reaching the quarter-finals of the World Open by beating the fourth-seeded Brett Martin, writes Richard Jago in Nairobi.

The 23-year-old from Hertfordshire, a replacement for Peter Marshall, who is suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome, triumphed 9-15, 15-11, 17-16, 15-13 against a player who reached the British Open final last year.

France and NZ take prizes

RUSSELL COULTIS of New Zealand and Isobel Autissier of France were named YRU-Sperry Top-Sider World Sailors of the Year in Hainburg yesterday, writes Bob Fisher. They were chosen by voters from more than 60 countries.

Coultis, an Olympic gold medal winner in 1984, was skipper of New Zealand's Black Magic, 5-0 winner of the America's Cup, and Autissier is the first woman to win a leg of the BOC single-handed race round the world; she took the first, from Charleston to Cape Town, 1,200 nautical miles ahead of the next competitor.

Britain thwarted by bad light

Great Britain's women's hockey international against the United States in Cape Town yesterday had to be abandoned 15 minutes from time because of bad light, writes Pat Rowley. Britain led 1-0 through a 42nd-minute goal from Jane Skismit.

White hits top mark twice

JIMMY WHITE made two breaks of 147 in an exhibition snooker match against John Virgo at the De Montfort Hall, Leicester, writes Chris Evertson. It is the first time two maximums have been made in the same evening and in a subsequent frame White took blacks with his first 12 reds.

Sampson cleared by video

DEAN SAMPSON, Castleford's England rugby league prop, has been cleared by the RFL after being put on report during his side's 37-8 home defeat by London on Sunday. He was singled out by the referee after an incident involving the Broncos' winger Mark Riley but was cleared after league officials watched a video.

Neale eyes SA pace pair

PHIL NEALE, Warwickshire's director of cricket coaching, is extending his search for an overseas replacement for Brian Lara to South Africa, where the pacemen Brett Schultz and Shaun Pollock are thought to be targets. Nottinghamshire, meanwhile, have signed the 27-year-old all-rounder Chris Tolley, formerly with Worcestershire, on a two-year contract.

Kawashima keeps his title

HIROSHI KAWASHIMA of Japan retained the World Boxing Council super-flyweight title in Tokyo when he stopped Boy Arum of Indonesia in the third round. The referee stepped in after Arum had been floored three times in the round.

'Loser' Price still in the money

NICK PRIOR, last year's Open and USPGA champion, has not won a golf tournament this year but is still commanding hefty appearance money, writes Michael Britten in Dubai. His first appearance in the 24th Hassan Trophy, which starts today and is worth \$50,000 to the winner, is reportedly costing Morocco's golf-loving king \$250,000. King Hassan has also undertaken to supply fuel for the personal jet that flew Prior and his family from their Florida home, plus accommodation for two pilots at Prior's beck and call during a holiday in Zanzibar and South Africa.

French test next for Adams

MICHAEL ADAMS plays France's chess No. 1 Joel Lautier this afternoon in the fourth and final leg of the Intel World Grand Prix in Paris, writes Leonard Borden. The 24-year-old Cornishman won the London Grand Prix in September and is second in the opposite half of the draw from Garry Kasparov, one of three players ahead of the Briton in the race for the grand prix crown.

MCC to consider imposing ban on 'catch-all' gloves

Peter Mason

ABAN on baseball-style wicketkeeping gloves is likely to be considered by the MCC this month, amid growing concern that the idiot-proof gloves are ruining the stumper's art.

Proposals for a ban on "catch-all" webbing between the thumb and index finger of the gloves have already been approved by the International Cricket Council and are expected to be discussed by the MCC's cricket committee on November 28.

As a ban would require a change to the laws of the game, the proposals would have to be put to a vote at the MCC's annual general meeting next May.

John Jameson, assistant secretary to the cricket committee, said the changes were being put forward because administrators believed gloves with big catching areas were

giving wicketkeepers an unfair advantage.

"Basically they don't want anyone to be wearing baseball gloves," he said. "The idea is to phase large webbing out of first-class cricket over one year and out of club cricket over three."

An ICC spokesman said that a ban was favoured by most Test-playing nations. "We discussed it at our July meeting and a number of countries were concerned that webbing was becoming an artificial aid," he said. "We believe the issue needs to be addressed."

Jack Russell, the England wicketkeeper, uses gloves with only minimal webbing to protect his thumbs and would like to see baseball-mitt gloves "taken totally out of the game".

Opposition to a ban will come from manufacturers alarmed at having to redesign their gloves to conform to new laws.

Taylor faces his most daunting test

David Hopps on a potentially volatile series between Australia and Pakistan which began at Brisbane's Gabba earlier today

MARK TAYLOR has already won respect as a successful Australian captain. If he manages to keep the peace over the next month in a potentially volatile Test series against Pakistan, there will be good cause to call him a great one.

Bribery charges levelled by three Australians against the former Pakistan captain Salim Malik, who has since been restored to the side after an internal inquiry acquitted him, have ensured that the three-Test series will, at best, take place in an atmosphere of underlying tension.

Since assuming the Australian captaincy from Allan Border, Taylor has curbed his side's tendency to exces-

sive sledging, without suppressing the aggressive edge that lies at the heart of their success.

For all the diplomatic build-up to the first Test, which got under way here today, keeping tempers in check against Pakistan represents the greatest test of Taylor's career.

"It's not been an ideal situation, with regard to the Salim Malik situation," he admitted. "But I hope that things are settling down."

"We all feel let down by the ICC's unwillingness to become involved, but it is out of our hands. Such matters must be dealt with by the powers that be as they see fit. We have to get on with playing cricket."

Bobby Simpson, Australia's coach, called a truce in the affair. "That's the end of it. We just want to play cricket," he said yesterday.

Shane Warne was due to confront Malik at The Gabba for the first time since the allegations that the Pakistani offered bribes to Warne and his Australia team-mates Tim May and Mark Waugh to underperform on last year's tour of Pakistan.

Warne has required counselling from within the Australia set-up to restore his morale after his initial shock at Malik's selection.

"Shane was feeling on edge two weeks ago, but that is past him now," said Simpson. "He's had a lot of advice, discussions and as-

stance and I think he just wants to get out there and do it with the ball."

Malik has further stirred the controversy by suggesting that Warne's leg-spin caused him no problems in Pakistan last winter. Although Warne took 15 wickets in the three-Test series, he failed to dismiss Malik, whose 657 runs made a massive contribution to Pakistan's 1-0 series victory.

Considering the upheavals of the past year, Pakistan's players have looked remarkably relaxed and approachable in recent days.

If much depends upon Taylor, the same can be said of Lancashire's Wasim Akram, Pakistan's fifth captain this year, and a man whose ability to bridge two vastly different cultures has never been more sorely needed.

It's not cricket, Q2, page 4

Entertainments

THEATRE LONDON

APOLLO VICTORIA 0171-410 0200. **STARLIGHT EXPRESS** "A musical about the London Underground." 0171-410 0200. **FAME** "The story of the music industry." 0171-410 0200. **THE HOTHOUSE** "A play about the greenhouse effect." 0171-410 0200. **THE GLASS MENAGERIE** "A play about a family in crisis." 0171-410 0200. **THE MASTER BUILDER** "A play about a man's obsession." 0171-410 0200. **THE WOMAN IN BLACK** "A play about a woman's revenge." 0171-410 0200. **THE PERFECT TRILLER** "A play about a thriller." 0171-410 0200.

AN INSPECTOR CALLS "A play about a detective." 0171-410 0200. **THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS** "A play about a river." 0171-410 0200. **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST** "A play about a man's life." 0171-410 0200. **THE CRAYON** "A play about a child's world." 0171-410 0200. **THE CRAYON** "A play about a child's world." 0171-410 0200. **THE CRAYON** "A play about a child's world." 0171-410 0200.

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Easy rider heads for Spain, page 13

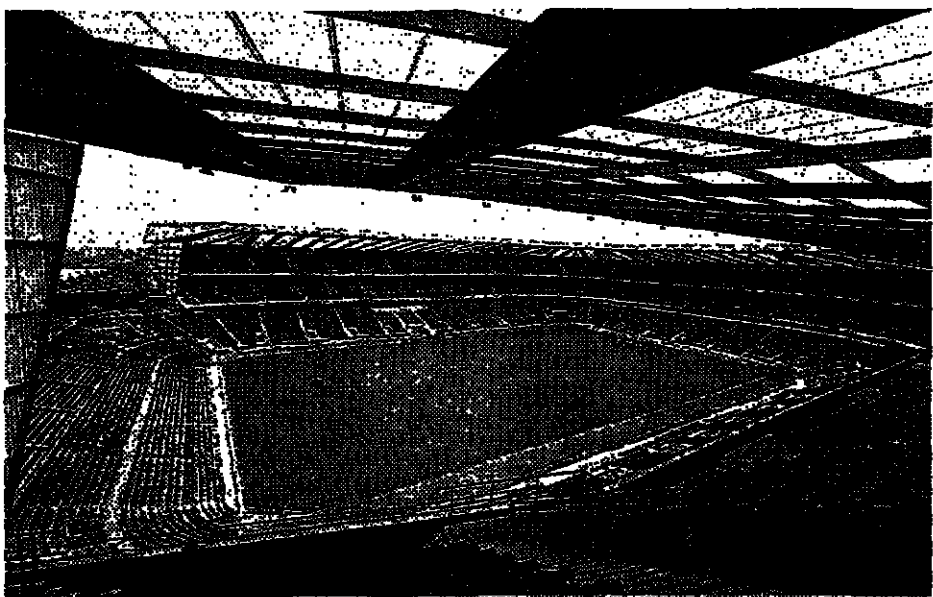
Champions take game to Newcastle, page 14

Ferguson appeal turned down, page 14

Australia appeal for Test peace, page 15

SportsGuardian

THE RUGBY REVOLUTION



Twickenham blueprint calls for Five Nations Championship to move to May but, with television revenue at stake, France may lead objectors

Robert Armstrong on radical plans for the future of the game in Europe

Grounds for change... once-conservative Twickenham

England strikes out alone

ENGLAND is set for an historic showdown with France, Wales, Scotland and Ireland over the future of the Five Nations Championship.

Yesterday Tony Hallett, the Rugby Football Union secretary, defended his union's plan to hold the game's oldest tournament in May and make a potential £100 million from the sale of the television rights. But he admitted the need for hard bargaining with the other unions to make the idea a reality.

Hallett led the presentation of a special report on professionalism by the RFU's commission at Twickenham that will serve as a blueprint for the long-term future of English rugby. The most controversial of the commission's proposals, the shifting of the Five Nations from its dates in January, February and March, is likely to be opposed by the players, who with the four other unions have not yet been consulted.

The greatest obstacle to holding the championship on successive Saturdays and Sundays in May is likely to be France, which has a long-

standing agreement with TV to hold its national championship finals in May. "God knows what the French will think about this," the chairman of the RFU's executive, John Jeavons-Fellows, said with a smile. "Perhaps all the unions will tell us to bugger off."

Jeavons-Fellows, one of England's representatives on the Five Nations committee, which next meets on December 12, will play a crucial part in the RFU's attempt to persuade its competitive partners that such a radical change is in their interest.

There are serious logistical reasons to reject a plan that has been assiduously promoted by TV executives in the belief that it will produce higher prime-time ratings. First, overseas tours by national squads in May/June would be out of the question; second, it would be impracticable for British and Irish players to participate in Lions tours or the World Cup (whenever it is held in the southern hemisphere) directly after the championship; third, many British professionals will soon be playing summer rugby in

New Zealand and South Africa.

Hallett conceded that the physical demands that European league and cup competition would place on international players would be considerable. But Don Ruth-erford, the RFU's technical di-

rector, said countries would use a squad of say 25 to 30 players for international tournaments, just as in the World Cup.

If the RFU hopes to achieve consensus over its plan among the five nations it will have quickly to revise its pol-

icy of claiming the lion's share of the TV revenue on the contentious ground that England command higher ratings. By 1996, the earliest year the May format could be introduced, TV rights to the tournament will be worth well over £100 million, a sum that might persuade all the unions to join the gravy train.

Nevertheless the collective response of the players, who are forming a Rugby Union Players' Association, could make or break the RFU's blueprint, which also envisages English clubs participating in Continental competition next autumn.

The players will have to consider an RFU plan to restrict them to one agent each, which may prove difficult given that different agents perform different functions such as marketing, transfers and news-media work. Twickenham is demanding that each player's agent be registered with and approved by the RFU and that no agent shall represent more than one club, a condition that might constitute restraint of trade.

More controversial is the commission's proposal that a fee of £100 should be the maximum transfer payment for a player not contracted to his club. Players will receive no part of a transfer fee, a recipe perhaps for the return of inducements under the table.

Transfers would be regulated by a new RFU body known as Twickenham Services, which would be set up with a full-time office at an estimated cost of £250,000. None of the commission's proposals can take effect before approval by a special general meeting of RFU representatives at Twickenham due to be held before the new year. Meanwhile, Five Nations committee rooms are likely to be thick with the smoke of conspiratorial discussion.

Blueprint for change

- The RFU's qualification rules reduced to seven days next season
- The Five Nations championship switched to May from 1996, to be played on Saturdays and Sundays on consecutive weekends
- Division Two increased from 10 to 34 clubs and Division Three from 10 to 30 and teams
- The top four Division One clubs entered in a European tournament with the remaining six in an Anglo-Welsh competition
- Players' contracts lodged at Twickenham, with each club's transfer fee
- A new national disciplinary panel for out-of-play players to correct infractions in sentencing
- The main RFU committee replaced by the Council and a new executive committee retained for financial management. It will include professionals from the domestic, legal and playing sides of the game
- A pre-season charity charity match between the English and Heineken League winners



FRANK COTTON (former Lions prop): "Playing the Five Nations in May would be incredibly tough on the players. To play through 25 or 30 weeks of intensive competition — domestic leagues, European leagues, cup games — then four international matches in succession. Saturday, Saturday, Saturday. No. Bloody hell, that's too much. They play too much already. An April competition would make far more sense."

Twickers goes marching to a different tune



Frank Keating

ONE GAME — but now two different hearts are beating, and two sets of legs are marching to a totally different drum.

It is time to join the real world, says Twickenham. If so, the vast majority of its legion of rugby men and teams want to stop the world and get off. They are perfectly happy with their old world, thank you very much.

The RFU's revolutionary declaration sounds cataclysmic. But at most it will affect 20 per cent of the rugby-playing fraternity. The huge core of the game, just as their granddads did, will continue to enjoy their jolly Saturday afternoon head-banging around their provincial paddocks, and will continue to sup their fraternal ale and sing silly and singular songs in the cosy clubhouses of England.

And as they do so, once the novelty has fast worn off, I dare say they will scarcely throw a glance at any satellite television screen flickering high in the corner of the bar as the replays are interminably rerun of that week's try-a-minute series of global games played between their highly paid and highly trained brothers representing XVs of unrelenting bearing names made up and day-glo colours matched and mixed by television moguls' marketing men.

Who cares a hoot about these smartarse slickers — so long as the real game goes on oblivious to them?

ONE game, two hearts and for sure the convivial ruggers men of England will give not a fig for them, and soon enough will turn off their product and turn back to real life and slap good comrades on the back and say: "Good game today, lads, whose turn next for the kitty?"

Yesterday's news would be excellent if it meant Twickenham's obsession with its tiny elite would stop it tinkering with real rugby's soul and spirit and tradition. The huge majority, if fancy, would readily vote for a return to the

good ol' 25-yard line, kicking for touch, the 3-2-1 scrum, and a half-time long enough to sink a pint and get through half a Senior Service.

By gorgeous fluke — as wondrous as the one by which the Paris decision on RU's rampant professionalism was made on August 28, precisely a century to the eve of RU's original breakaway — this very morning is republished, 35 years since its happy birth, Michael Green's classic *Art of Rugby* (Robson, £8.95) which evokes the days when every club goalpost in the land was covered in scorch-marks where players waiting for a conversion had quick drags and stubbed out their cigarettes. Green recalls the time Tommy Gray, the grand Northampton and Scotland full-back, was sent off at Franklins Gardens for asking the ref for a light.

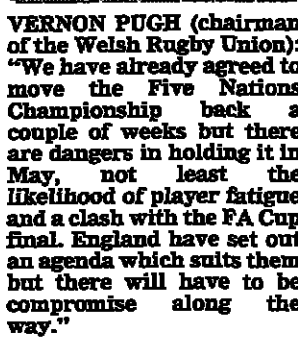
The deep roots of rugby, with luck, can now revert to such sacredly held strictures, and scriptures.

WHAT Twickenham did yesterday was to destroy wistfully and at a stroke a crucial part of a culture and a social life of the British sporting way of life. Make the most of these final fixtures — for soon off, off, off will be these truly beloved winter pilgrimages round the five nations to Dublin, Edinburgh, Paris, Cardiff and London.

The very love and legend of rugby's long (and usually, happily, lost) weekends have been wiped brutally from the calendar. They had been a truly crucial flame not lit up the gloaming of the frosty coffin-days of winter. Dammit, friends and generations of families built social structures of good fellowship around these merry dances round the five cities, each with their own customs: ferries booked; bed-and-breakfast; thermals on; scarves; a twirling; hipflasks primed; and see you same-time-same-place in two years' time.

Someone at Twickenham's nuts. Well, nuts in May. The Five Nations in May? It is hard enough to get a hotel room in Dublin in January, and only because Yanks don't know about rugby. Edinburgh the same: once the summer has begun, there won't be room for rugby.

Alas for that. But for the rest, as Twickenham this morning heads its own sweet and moneyed path, the massive majority of rugby won't miss them. Or probably not notice they've gone.



VERNON PUGH (chairman of the Welsh Rugby Union): "We have already agreed to move the Five Nations Championship back a couple of weeks but there are dangers in holding it in May, not least the likelihood of player fatigue and a clash with the FA Cup final. England have set out an agenda which suits them but there will have to be compromise along the way."

PETER WHEELER (Leicester president and former England captain): "The danger is that some clubs will be left behind. We have been asked to go from 60mph in three seconds and that is difficult. More clubs will have to pay administrators."

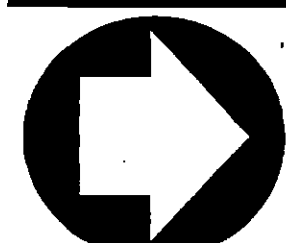
on tour with sky South Africa vs England

five test series starts 16 november ends 6 january



NO TURNING BACK

live and exclusive on sky sports get installed now at your local electrical retailer and celebrate England's historic return to South Africa with six months free sky sports when you subscribe to all sky channels for 12 months offer closes 18 november

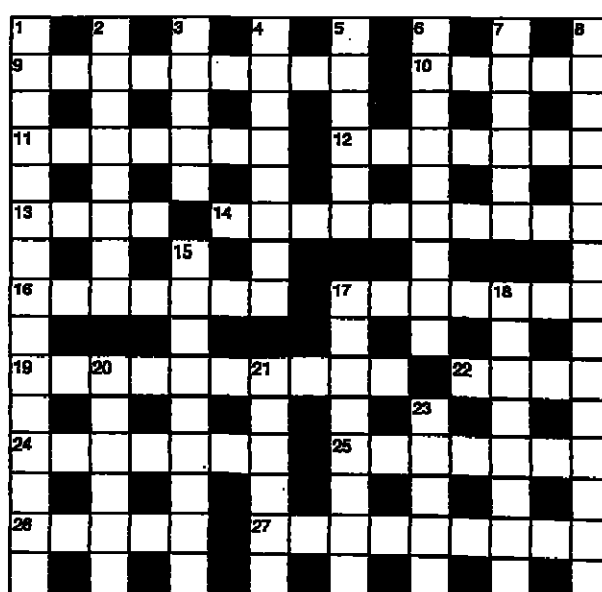


He's not what you would call a violent person, he says, at least not all the time. It's just if anyone causes him grief, he flips. "And when I flip, I really flip. I just lose my rag." He shrugs his shoulders, baffled by his own behaviour. "I just turn into a mental person and start beating them up."

G2 page 8

Guardian Crossword No 20,494

Set by Rufus



Across

- An insect's metamorphosis is going on continuously (9)
- Rear coaches (5)
- Dated and removed (4,3)
- Unscrupulous king to vanish when found out (7)
- Old character will come quickly to the point (4)
- Female supporter at the match (10)
- Dream I'm going round with a fabulous girl (7)
- Most just starve without bad feeling (7)
- Furious because someone stepped on your toe? (7,3)
- The last thing one might be taken for (4)
- They may be responsible for reports from the front (7)
- I'm holding a number said to be corrupt (7)

Down

- Tribute provided by the gallery for inborn talent? (4,4,3,4)
- No chores undone in this vessel (8)
- Bar in which poets may be found (5)
- Hesitated to have the key changed (8)
- Set an unusual task is given to journalist (8)
- Vessel in which shipmates riot? (9)
- Mounted horse, for example, gets a plate (6)
- Place to make one's name as a contractor (2,3,6,4)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,493

- Nothing to show this is a political statement (5)
- It's possible a belief's been shaken (8)
- Government leader in Arab state made to leave home (8)
- He wrote a letter in Greek to a Roman (8)
- He'd support a fuel cut (8)
- One wise man's got the picture (5)

Solution tomorrow

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